

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE
INSTITUT UNIVERSITAIRE DE HAUTES ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES

**A STUDY
OF BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION
AND THE EUROPEAN APPEASEMENT POLICY
1933 - 39**

THÈSE

PRÉSENTÉE A L'UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE
POUR OBTENIR LE GRADE DE DOCTEUR ÈS SCIENCES POLITIQUES

PAR

THOMAS WHEELER NAGLE

DES

ETATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE
B.A., M.A., UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

THÈSE N° 109

LIBRAIRIE CHMIELORZ
WIESBADEN, ALLEMAGNE
HERRNMÜHLGASSE 11 A
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La Commission Mixte, composée des Doyens des Facultés de Droit, des Lettres, et des Sciences économiques et sociales, et du Directeur de l'Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, sur le préavis de MM. Maurice Baumont, Maurice Bourquin et Jacques Freymond, professeurs à l'Institut Universitaire, autorise l'impression de la présente thèse, sans entendre par là exprimer d'opinion sur les propositions qui y sont énoncées.

Genève, le 4 mars 1957

Pour la Commission Mixte:

Jacques Freymond

Directeur de l'Institut Universitaire

"The more one reflects upon current political life, the more one comes to the conclusion that it is the tide of public opinion that flows on all the time, and that parties align themselves alongside the tide, hoping to guide it and to keep touch with it and I think perhaps we flatter ourselves in political life in the value we accord to the work of political parties in actually forming the tide itself. It is the tide that flows on and we have to keep our place in it, we have to recognize its strength, and we have to recognize its direction . . ."

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PREFACE

The following study presents in broad outline the story of British opinion in regard to the British Government's efforts from 1933 to 1939 to save the nation from war through appeasement. Today it is especially significant because world opinion is again divided over the merits of appeasement.

The period divides itself into three parts: the first, in which opinion was very divided and controversial and called by Mr. Churchill as "five years of eager search for the line of least resistance," begins in the early part of 1933 and ends shortly before the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1938; the second, in which all-out appeasement was followed, begins with the Anglo-Italian accord and ends with the pledge to defend Poland; while the third and last part, which witnessed the end of appeasement, as far as major elements of public opinion were concerned, starts with the Polish commitment by Britain and concludes with the start of war late in the summer of 1939.

At the start of the third period, the British guarantee to Poland was accepted by a united Parliament and endorsed by nearly all groups of opinion within the country. It was not only a change in the nation's foreign policy, but a change of national opinion to resist all further aggression in Europe. Prior to the German seizure of all Czechoslovakia, no British Parliament would have approved such a commitment in Eastern Europe, but at the time of the German occupation of Prague, it would have been demanded by Parliament and British opinion had it not been proposed by the British Government. It had become a condition of national unity. There were later attempts by some groups to return to full appeasement, but the majority in Britain stood fast on the line drawn in Poland until the outbreak of war.

This study takes no side on the actual appeasement policy. It endeavors to show the trend and influence of public opinion in Britain during the period under study. Inasmuch as popular feeling for and against that policy grew out of the conditions left by the previous war and, as Sir Arthur Salter stated, "The failures of this period between 1933 and 1939 should not be wholly placed at the feet of the leaders of that period," a brief chapter is included as an introduction to the main study.

This does not pretend to be a review of British foreign policy during the twenty years between wars or even during the period between 1933 and 1939. The diplomatic history is held to a minimum necessary for the understanding of the great sweep of historical events that swept Europe and the world in the period between wars. Where necessary, the attitude of other states is indicated, particularly that of the United States, because in spite of

the American withdrawal from European politics soon after the end of the first World War, that nation continued to be a factor in European politics which in turn influenced British opinion and policy.

Inevitably, a historical review of this type must deal with some basic events rather in general, because they are well known, whereas some less-explored forces and developments must be discussed in greater detail if they seem to throw additional light on the historical origins of the situation in which we find ourselves in today.

Therefore, attention is concentrated on the British public's reactions and influence on the Government's political attempts to secure a preliminary agreement with Germany and Italy as the essential first step towards a general European settlement. Little mention is made of the situation in the Far East during the period under review and then only when it was a direct factor on British policy in Europe. The study endeavors to indicate the stand and the resulting action taken by British public opinion at every stage of the policy of appeasement as undertaken by Britain after 1933.

I would express my warmest appreciation and gratitude to Professors Maurice Bourquin and Maurice Baumont, both of the Graduate Institute of International Studies at Geneva, Switzerland and the late Professor Paul Mantoux, formerly of the Graduate Institute, who originally suggested the subject, all of whom, with their minute knowledge and wide experience, have given me much invaluable criticism, wise counsel and friendly encouragement. I am also greatly indebted for invaluable aid to those who have read and commented on the MSS., in whole or in part.

I also wish to acknowledge the generous assistance and warm support of the library staffs in the Documents Division of the University of California Library at Berkeley, California and the United Nations Library in Geneva, Switzerland, and particularly to Mr. N. S. Field. My deepest thanks as well to the staff of the Graduate Institute for their warm support throughout my period of study in Geneva.

Thomas W. Nagle

Geneva, Switzerland

1956

INTRODUCTION

The science of politics is a science of human behavior. It concerns itself with a specific segment of the activities of humans—those which either take place in, or have a clearly discernible effect upon, the formal governmental machinery of the nation. Therefore the question of public opinion arises.

What is public opinion, to which all governments look for support in the performance of their duties? Why is public opinion so important? And how important is public opinion? How does it operate in a democracy? And how does it affect the individuals of any particular country?

WHAT IS PUBLIC OPINION?

Public opinion in general is what the people think. It is defined as the sum total of the opinions and judgments of the members of a community, or of a country, about basic issues and interests which affect their general welfare.

There is more than one "public." In the case of Britain, when a Member of Parliament speaks of public opinion, he usually refers to the views of the people of his district on the bills he is trying to put through. And when, for example, the Prime Minister of Great Britain speaks of public opinion, he means the attitude of the majority of Britains as a whole toward his policies and programs.

IS PUBLIC OPINION A FORCE?

It follows that public opinion has far greater force in a democracy than in a dictatorship. In the latter, actions of leaders may be halted eventually if opposed by the peoples; but in the former, proposed governmental actions are often rejected if the majority of the people oppose them.

APPEASEMENT AND OPINION

Appeasement seems easy to define. Whatever the dictionaries say, a large segment of world opinion today unfairly relates appeasement with the Munich Agreement. That body of opinion believes that Neville Chamberlain, with the approval of British opinion, in endeavoring to avoid war, tried to buy peace from the aggressors and made heavy concessions in return for empty pledges. At Munich, Britain abandoned allies in an effort to avoid war and Mr. Chamberlain claimed "peace in our time" when peace had become impossible. That was appeasement and in spite of the motives behind Munich, according to this view, the ugly but useful word will always bear the stamp of Munich.

However, in the realm of political science and historical analysis, an impartial definition of appeasement must consider carefully the character and background of the particular foreign policy carried out by Great Britain during the period under study before reaching any conclusion regarding appeasement.

In the development of Britain's foreign policy during the period under study, the difficulty was less in choosing ends or objectives than in finding the means of attaining those objectives. Britain's problem of choosing ends, in fact, arose largely out of the limitation of available means. If you have the means only for a Volkswagon automobile, you may as well save yourself the trouble of planning to have a Cadillac. Similarly, it would have been useless and perhaps even dangerous for Britain as a nation to have decided, say, that she would forthwith run the Germans out of Austria immediately following the Anschluss in 1938, when the military means, as well as other means, adequate to that end, were not available to Britain.

For example, it is easy to ridicule the efforts made by the British Government under Chamberlain to bring about a rapprochement with Fascist Italy. The objective of that policy, as such, was logical — to prevent the consolidation of the Axis by seeking to persuade Mussolini to hold back from finally committing his country to full support of the Germans. It was the means adopted, rather than the end to which they were directed, which brought about the failure of this policy. Like so many dictators, Mussolini was impressed, apparently, only by strength. What London intended as a concession invariably brought about new Italian demands.

Yet, in retrospect, a study of most of the facts indicates that a different treatment could have produced different results. Whether at that time Britain could have used other means is questionable. It is known that Mussolini had moments of grave doubt and indecision about Italy's Axis policy, especially after the Nazi conquest of Austria. But by a stroke of constancy in the foreign policy of Britain, a renewed effort at appeasement invariably came from London just when a show of strength and resolution was most required. It would appear that Italy was pushed into Hitler's plans by the very eagerness of Chamberlain to embrace Mussolini on any terms. Perhaps if Britain had given way less, Mussolini would have hesitated longer, and at last decided against a course which only led to ruin.

The tools used by the makers of British foreign policy in the period under study can partially be attributed to faulty intelligence. Britain was frequently in need of a re-examination of her course in those years. She failed to make the necessary reappraisals of her estimates and assumptions. One might ask if her official maps were correct? They were not. And although Britain was not alone in this regard, it is a principal reason why in so many critical regions of the world, particularly Europe, her policy failed, and why so often she found she was not only opposed by the Axis Powers, but that she did not have the support of her allies nor the necessary approval from the other friendly nations.

Therefore, the management of a nation's foreign affairs is, in this sense, less a matter of good intentions than of a sound evaluation of a nation's means. This was a reality that Britain had to face reluctantly for Britain usually had all the means necessary. Throughout most of Britain's more recent history, her limited external objectives usually had been well within her resources. Consequently, in international affairs, successive British Governments took to utopianism more readily than to concepts of what was actually within her means.

Primary reliance on "good will" was a British tradition. Time after time, it has been exemplified in her historic attitudes toward peace and war that emphasis was placed on the settlement of disputes by negotiation and the tendency to conclude wars by peace settlements designed to remove all bitterness. Historically, Britain has tended, if anything, to underrate the need for force or the threat of force to insure her interests, assuming she had the force necessary at any particular moment. However, she did not alter this policy sufficiently to meet the changing political conditions during the period under study.

The limitation of means, it should be noted, embraced all the elements of Britain's external power and influence, moral as well as material. In the management of foreign affairs, wasting a nation's diplomatic strength was as serious as, for example, allowing the armed forces to shrink to a dangerously low point, as was the case at the time of Munich.

A very important factor which accounts for much of the national acquiescence in the Baldwin - MacDonald - Chamberlain policy was the almost universal belief that nobody in his normal senses, and certainly not the responsible leader of any nation, would be such a fool as to start war again. Irresponsible national leaders might threaten and push, or even, as indicated during the period under study, send Italians against Abyssinians, create border incidents and stir up racial minorities within other countries, but no one could ever take a decision that would re-establish the bitter fighting of millions as remembered in the First World War. Public opinion in Britain, as well as in all the free countries of the world, believed that, confronted by such a possibility, no one could possibly commit such an act of criminal folly. Opinion believed that at the last moment the aggressors would retreat.

Yet allied with this feeling among the masses was another feeling among the nation's leaders: fear. It was fear which, in the last word, held back the British Government from dealing with Mussolini in the Mediterranean as he should have been dealt with and as facts now indicate he could have been dealt with. Fear influenced the foreign policy of Britain, just as it did the foreign policy of all free governments, whose real interest was in the maintenance of law and order.

Long before the close of the period under study, the public read speeches by prominent spokesmen pointing out the ruin and devastation from air-bombings that were sure to come to Britain in the event of war. To this was

added the daily accounts with actual pictures of the death and destruction to cities in Spain during the Civil War.

Duff Cooper, shortly after his resignation, best interpreted the feeling with these words,

... The nations are living under the law of the jungle, where the doctrine of peace at any price means paying the price of shame and not getting peace in return for it, and where non-resistance means self-destruction.

Yet there are many people today who, having been subjected to twenty years of intensive anti-war propaganda, are almost unconsciously sinking into acceptance of the doctrine of peace at any price, without fully realizing that it is a doctrine of despair.¹

Furthermore, in the middle and later stages of the period under study, Britain's foreign policy, as influenced by opinion at home, was further shaped and its aims shifted as a result of the public's fear of the growing power of the Axis combination. While captured Axis documents indicate that this was a false assumption, the British Government had no access to the complete facts at that time.

Guideposts for the policy of appeasement were further established by the British Government's belief that concessions granted to Germany and Italy would encourage the Axis powers to maintain the European peace. Chamberlain and those close to him not only hoped for peaceful international change and German reconciliation but also believed that irrespective of all moral considerations the German drive for conquest could be delayed or even stopped if Germany were allowed to make gains. The theory that the problem of National Socialism and Fascism would be solved by satisfying the Axis demands was tempting, particularly since it was a solution at the expense of countries that British opinion tended to consider "far-off" lands and not worth fighting over. The British Government undoubtedly hoped that each new agreement made with the Axis Powers would be honored, but were prepared to overlook violations of such agreements and offer to negotiate new concessions in the hope that peace would be maintained in Europe.

However, the British leaders failed to realize that international morality is only effective when all nations live up to their agreements. Gangsters remain gangsters no matter how many reprieves they may be given. Unfortunately in Britain and in other democracies — and this is true today — where materialism and the comforts of living bred a wishful-thinking philosophy there was a tendency to throw moral principles to the winds and rely wholly on expedient policies. This meant giving concessions to Germany and Italy to buy their cooperation — a position which Hitler and Mussolini calculated as an indication that Britain and France would never draw the line on appeasement.

¹ Duff Cooper, *The Second World War*, p. 35.

This hope then, that by concessions, the Axis Powers would not start a war, was based on a faulty appraisal of Hitler. In both British official and public thinking, the new German nationalism which emerged in the early Thirties was the same as that which had asserted itself in recent history. It is unfair to blame this lack of understanding exclusively on the British statesmen of that period. The entire nation could be blamed just as well for believing in and not questioning the notion of the unbreakable continuity of national character and national interests and failing to pay more attention to the social and moral forces that determined the true policies of the Axis Powers. It may be said as well that the same lack of critical analysis of the source and substance of national policies was not limited to Britain by any means nor to the period under study and it explains also many shortcomings in the policies of the Allied Powers during World War II.

A serious and never-ending problem which faced British policy-makers in the period was that of determining the limits of concessions. Time after time, Britain gave considerable concessions to avoid the risk of war at particular times, only to be presented with new demands later. They would not, or could not, draw the line and say, in effect, "This far and no further." It may well be that no limits could be placed on concessions by the British during the period in view of the fact that Britain could not back up any stand with sufficient force, or so the British statesmen believed at the time. Instead they adopted the course of meeting new emergencies with new concessions.

All other things being equal, letting the aggressor know that such-and-such an act meant all-out war would have been far more likely to have prevented both all-out and limited wars than letting him believe he would get away with small aggressions, as for example, aggressions against small allies. History indicates that brushfires have a dangerous tendency to spread, either because one side may suddenly decide — to the amazement of the misled aggressor — that this is one brushfire too many.

A recent example of this shows that where the United States stood fast, as in Greece, in Iran, and during the Berlin blockade, the aggressor has backed down. In so doing, the United States simply followed the general principle that no nation deliberately takes steps it knows will precipitate a major war.

On the other hand, Britain provides history with an example of a failure to limit concessions. Only two weeks after Hitler's speech before the chiefs of Germany's armed forces in November of 1937, Lord Halifax visited Hitler for the purpose of exploring the possibilities for an Anglo-German agreement. Hitler was pleased to hear Germany described by Lord Halifax as "the bulwark of the West against Bolshevism," but even more surprised to learn that "the British did not believe that the *status quo* had to be maintained in all circumstances." And Lord Halifax added that among the questions in which changes would probably be made sooner or later were Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. He noted that England was only in-

terested in seeing that such questions were brought about by peaceful means. Yet Neville Chamberlain was apparently not disturbed by the report that Lord Halifax brought back from Germany.

And as indicated further on in this study, the annexation of Austria, as such, was not deplored by Britain, but only the methods employed by Hitler to achieve his ends. Still, no action was taken to warn Hitler in no uncertain terms to desist from any future act of this nature. France was held in line, and no definite British statement was made that Britain would assist France in case of a German attack on Czechoslovakia. Had Britain had the means and the desire, the alternate policy of stating to the Axis aggressors that such-and-such a step meant war would have been useful.

In any evaluation of the policy of appeasement, the character of the concessions should be carefully considered. There is a distinction between those concessions which are justified and those which are injurious to another state or contrary to certain international principles. For example, the concessions made by Britain in the Anglo-German Naval Pact of 1935 were justified because the concessions did not, in a true sense, infringe on the rights of any other state.

On the other hand, the Treaty of Munich of September 29, 1938, which gave Hitler the Sudetenland, definitely infringed on the rights of another state. It was brought about by bringing the utmost Anglo-French pressure to bear upon the Prague Government. France most flagrantly violated her treaties with Czechoslovakia. The Czechs did not even have a voice in the drafting of the Munich Agreement. Both France and Britain also disregarded their obligations under the League Covenant and refused cooperation with the other great power, Russia, which had become a member of the League Council. Expediency was the rule, for all of this was done in the expectation that the full realization of the principle of nationality would afford a better foundation of the European peace and that Germany, once her grievances against the Treaty of Versailles were satisfied, would join the European community.

Nevertheless, the cause of peace and international law was not helped when the peace-loving and law-abiding states assented to a breach of law in order to avoid a "unilateral" action that was more correctly a crime. Such an agreement was not only an act of folly when accompanied by the actual sacrifice of the strength involved, but was contrary to the principles of international conduct and law.

One of the most important influences on the policy of appeasement was that Britain generally could not act otherwise. The issue, in its simplest terms, was "negotiate or fight." As such, it troubled Britain and the other democratic countries in virtually every serious struggle with Fascist totalitarianism during the period between wars and particularly during the period under study. It arose in acute form in the Hoover Administration when Secretary Stimson wanted to create a strong front against the Japanese rape of Manchuria, but the British Government wanted to move

with extreme caution. The same problem arose in every crisis with the Axis Powers.

At the time there existed among the statesmen of Britain, and in public opinion as well, two divergent views of the basic international problem facing Britain in her dealings with Germany and Italy. One view assumed that the Axis Powers were motivated primarily by a planned program of world conquest. There are, incidently, similar views regarding present-day world political problems. This view further held that in pursuing this program, the Axis Powers would make no pledges that they did not intend to break at the first opportunity and that any British concession was only an invitation to further aggressions.

The other view held that the tensions were not necessarily inappeaseable and that there was good reason for negotiation. It was believed that agreements which rested on realities were not necessarily made only to be violated and that in all dangerous areas it was possible to look for an effective stabilization that could be enduring.

There were very serious objections to the latter view. History now indicates that to negotiate without first creating a very powerful apparatus of unity and military strength is to risk defeat in the negotiations. So long as Britain and her principal allies, notably France, failed to combine their policies and create a military strength greater than the opposition in Europe, negotiations led from one "appeasement" to another from early in the Thirties down to World War II.

In view of the alarming reports on German rearmament and the consolidation of Axis strength, it is doubtful that Britain, even had she desired, would have risked challenging Germany prior to the British pledge of support to Poland. She could hardly do otherwise then or in the preceding years under study. Even at the time of the Polish pledge, which she could hardly avoid, there was an element of chance involved. For example, Britain at that time was charged with bluffing about intervention in the event that Poland was attacked. In international politics, it is generally dangerous to be thought bluffing. Britain was well aware of this chance and realized that a bluff only encourages the aggressors to raise their price, which in turn, increases the chance of war.

Therefore, Britain's foreign policy during this period had to be based on an accurate evaluation of the total strength available to her to oppose the demands of the Axis Powers. When the victorious combination of 1918 had been completely dissolved, the new combinations of aggressor states were formed without opposition. By 1936, these combinations existed and their first action was to prevent the British, French, and Russians from recreating their own alliance. At Munich in 1938, Hitler compelled Britain and France to separate themselves from Russia. Meanwhile the United States had persuaded itself, by passing the Neutrality Act that it must be separated from Britain and France and turned its main attention toward Japan. These were facts that British foreign policy had to consider and the

means of carrying out her foreign policy were accordingly shaped and limited to one based for the most part on appeasement.

Therefore, British policy in the period under study required a painful retreat and it even required concessions from which nothing but time was gained. In that sense, it was not appeasement for Britain to extricate herself when it was necessary to do so.

THE DIFFICULTY OF GAUGING OPINION

For example, by our experience in the United States presidential election of 1948, it is seen how difficult it was to accurately ascertain public opinion in advance of the election. In that year, under American free political institutions, all conditions seemed especially favorable to an accurate determination in advance of the voters' preferences. Yet all the aids for determining public opinion in advance, separately and collectively, were seriously in error in predicting the final results.

How much more difficult must it be, then, for a historian to determine how British opinion stood on appeasement and to determine what influence that opinion had on British policy in the years immediately preceding the second World War.² In a country in a period of history when only one-half of one percent of the conversation of the average man in Britain was concerned with foreign policy, the difficulty of gauging British opinion is apparent. Even at certain crises of foreign policy, the British voter's interest did not increase materially. For example, at the time Mr. Eden resigned in 1938, the conversation of the average person was only three percent of what the British voter talked about and even at the time of Munich, the high point of discussion by the voter, it reached only six percent.³ In addition, British opinion polls were in their infancy and frequently Parliament did not debate foreign policy issues at the time of any particular crisis in the period under study, all of which increase the difficulty of gauging public opinion in regard to appeasement. Further, the examination of opinion in this regard is further handicapped by the tendency of party members, as a result of party loyalty or party whips, to vote a straight party ticket in any Parliamentary test of strength.

SOURCES FOR STUDY OF BRITISH OPINION

How, then, in such circumstances, can a present-day historian even approximate this opinion and its influence⁴ in regard to the particular foreign policy followed by the British Government between 1933 and 1939?⁵

² In this regard, see the remarks of Kennedy, *Why England Slept*, pp. 3-4.

³ S. C. Leslie, "How the Public Thinks," *The Spectator*, October 23, 1938, p. 704.

⁴ See for example such general references as Robert A. Dahl, *Congress and Foreign Policy* (New York, 1950, Part I; Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society* (New Haven, 1950), pp. 74-83; Richard C. Snyder, H. W. Bruck, Burton Sapin, *Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics* (Princeton, 1954).

⁵ Many helpful suggestions were found in Floyd H. Allport, "Toward a Science of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1937, V. 1, pp. 7-23; Lester Markel et al., *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy* (New York, 1949), 227 pp; Kurt London, *How Foreign Policy is Made* (New York, 1949), 277 pp; and Sir Robert Borden, "Collective Public Opinion," *International Conciliation*, 325:639, December, 1936.

Fortunately there are some sources available for the study of opinion during the period. First, there existed a very large and capable free press in Britain which at no time during the period under review was completely silenced.⁶ And a most important gauge of opinion was the British Parliament. In a country the size of Britain, the Majority of Parliamentary members were at home nearly every weekend and consequently were closely affected by opinion in their home districts. And unlike the pre-War days when a debate on foreign affairs was a rare occurrence, with one or two per year the limit and only a handful of members were specialized in foreign policy, the period under study was characterized by a debate on foreign affairs every two or three weeks, if not oftener, and then every member of Parliament counted himself a specialist in foreign affairs or at least took part in the debates on the subject.⁷ So it would be fair to state that the divisions within the British Parliament usually were a fair reflection of opinion throughout the country. For, in opinion analysis, the assumption that individual perceptions, evaluations and behavior are determined in large part by the standards and values of the groups with which the person identifies himself has become accepted doctrine.⁸

There were public opinion polls as well, which, although working on new ground in Britain, prove of some value, especially when matched with other sources. And while only one general election was held during the period under study, it and the numerous by-elections between 1933 and 1939 are useful indicators of opinion during those years. Additionally, various conferences usually were indicative of opinion trends within particular groups. Then there were several news columns which dealt entirely with commenting on opinion trends. Finally, there are numerous writings of people active in the foreign policy of Britain at that time and the reports of foreign diplomats, all of whom commented fairly accurately on opinion in Britain, particularly during times of crisis.⁹ Thus by scanning the public

⁶ It is realized that opinion as expressed in the press frequently differs from what ninety percent of the electorate think on issues and to lump together all the readers of one paper as if they were unanimously in support of that paper's policy is misleading. All we can do is to examine each type of propaganda and judge its probable effect. The 1938 *Report on the British Press*, in pointing out the intricate relationship between the public and the press consisting of 52 morning, 86 evening and 18 Sunday papers noted: "... in political issues strong currents of feeling and opinion awake in the country and are eventually, in spite of every effort to keep them down, reflected in the papers." *Report on the British Press*, issued by the Political and Economic Planning Group (London, 1938), 333 pp. See also D. W. Harding, "General Conceptions in the Study of the Press and Public Opinion," *Sociological Review*, V. 29, October 1937, pp. 370-90.

⁷ H of C, *Parl. Deb.*, V. 319, January 19, 1937, col. 93-4. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, July 2, 1937, p. 3.

⁸ George Belknap and Angus Campbell. "Political Party Identification and Attitudes Toward Foreign Policy," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. 15, 1951-52, No. 4.

⁹ An authoritative article on the formation of public opinion in Britain was written by John W. Defoe, "Public Opinion as a Factor in Government," *Public Opinion and World Politics* (Lectures on the Harris Foundation, 1933) (Chicago, 1933), pp. 3-16. See also Tom Harrison, "What is Public Opinion," *The Political Quarterly*, October, 1940, pp. 368-75. Of particular interest in regard to opinion analysis on the part of foreign diplomats is the recent publication of documents on German and Italian foreign policy from the archives of the German and Italian Foreign Ministries which contain some very accurate comments on British opinion during the period on the part of German and Italian officials in the respective legations in London.

platforms, the press, Parliamentary debates, memoirs and available documents, British and foreign, we can usually see the strength and direction of British public opinion.

YEARS OF FAITH

Why, after the effort in the war of 1914—18, did Britain find herself once again at war in 1939? Some feel that the answer is to be found in the appeasement policy followed by Britain after 1933. Yet a partial answer is found in the beliefs and policies evolved after the peace settlement of 1919 and the role of the League of Nations throughout the 1920s and 30s. Although the actual policy of appeasement did not openly appear as such until 1933, events before that year actually shaped and determined the structure of the policy followed after 1933.¹⁰

For four and a quarter years, the Allies had waged a "war to end all wars," and they were victorious. The Paris peace treaties were considered to constitute a world settlement. Britain's most powerful enemies in Europe had disappeared. Germany was disarmed and it was hoped that she would be unable to rearm for a long period of time. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had fallen to pieces and Russia, gone Communist, was self-centered, isolated, and virtually outside the European system. And, if trouble came, there was a world organization set up and managed in such a way that war was no longer a threat to world peace. And while the United States soon broke away from participation in the League, Britain had good reason to believe that the United States would never be Britain's enemy. Thus the hopes of the British people were bright. War would be no more and the League was sacred, inviolable and its power, wisely directed, was irresistible.¹¹

The French had never accepted that faith. At the Peace Conference she wanted to set the German frontier back to the Rhine, and she reluctantly abandoned that plan because of the Anglo-American guarantee of French independence and integrity.¹² The defection of the United States cancelled the guarantee, and the French felt badly let down. France had been invaded twice in recent history and, looking to the future, she could not see security in the future based on a weakened world organization. France wanted solid compensation that she could not be invaded again. Thus the League was valuable in so far as it maintained the settlements of the Versailles Treaty and held Germany in check. Failing that, France never did regard the League as an adequate safeguard for her own security and she soon turned to

¹⁰ See Floyd A. Cave and Associates, *The Origins and Consequences of World War II*, pp. 80-4; Varian Fry, *Bricks Without Mortar* (New York, 1938); R. Straus-Hupe and S. T. Possony, *International Relations* (New York, 1950), p. 152 ff; *Cmd 151* and 153.

¹¹ Sir Erward Grey *The League of Nations* (London, 1918); H. A. L. Fisher, *League of Nations Assembly, September 26, 1922, Records of the Third Assembly, Plenary Meetings, I. Text of the Debates*, p. 260.

¹² Marshal Foch, Declaration to the Peace Conference, May 6, 1919, *Documents Diplomatiques: Documents relatifs aux négociations concernant les garanties de sécurité contre une agression de l'Allemagne*, p. 54. See also Alfred Fabre-Luce, *La Crise des Alliances: essai sur les relations franco-britanniques depuis la signature de la paix* (1922), p. 16 ff.

the new states carved out of the old ones for alliances to guard her own security.¹²

In Britain, on the other hand, the prevailing opinion was that the French should put their full trust into the new organization for collective security.¹³ France might have done this if the United States had stood by the League and the guarantee. Repudiation, however, was fatal to the new order set up by the peace treaty. But the British public did not realize and their leaders failed to tell them, how tremendously the League was weakened by the American action.¹⁴ The League of Nations Union, in Britain, in which all parties were represented, maintained the view that the League still possessed overwhelming strength and in the emotional mood fostered by the Union, there was reluctance to admit that this strength was undermined.¹⁵ In addition, it was sometime before the British became convinced of the necessity for common defence on the Rhine and the fact remains that in the years immediately following the war, British opinion saw little reason to worry about the safety of the British Isles or to fear Germany.¹⁷

Because of its increasing importance in the later stages of the period under study, mention should be made of British policy in Eastern Europe. British policy towards Eastern Europe was never certain after World War I. In 1921, Lloyd George had told M. Briand that the British people were not interested in what happened on the eastern frontier of Germany and he added a statement later repeated by Neville Chamberlain in 1938:

The British people felt that the populations in that quarter of Europe were unstable and excitable; they might start fighting at any time He did not think, therefore, that his country would be disposed to give any guarantees which might involve them in military operations in any eventuality in that part of the world.¹⁸

In spite of warnings by such men as Sir James Headlam-Morley, British diplomats, in line with public opinion in Britain, chose the course outlined by Lloyd George. Sir Austen Chamberlain, in spite of his strong personal sympathies for France and his suspicions of Germany, was swayed by the general sentiment that Britain could and should avoid continental entanglements, except for limited commitments made for the security of the English Channel. Thus, by confining British guarantees at Locarno to Western Europe, Britain gave the impression that she was willing to tolerate changes in Eastern Europe, in direct contrast to the declared French policy.

¹² Memorandum, January 10, 1919. Documents Diplomatiques, p. 12.

¹³ J. Ramsey MacDonald, H. of C., Parl. Deb., V. 262, July 12, 1902, col. 1146. See also Fabre-Luce, *La Crise des Alliances*, pp. 16 ff.

¹⁴ Cmd 221.

¹⁵ *The Times*, August 28, 1923.

¹⁷ H. A. L. Fisher, League of Nations Assembly, September 26, 1922. Records of the Third Assembly, I, p. 296. See also Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, p. 284.

¹⁸ Cmd 2198, Papers Respecting Negotiations for an Anglo-French Pact, pp. 112 ff.

In the early postwar period then, the English did not see eye-to-eye with the French on European and Near Eastern problems. Britain did not second the French attempts to apply to Germany the principles of Henri II and Richelieu.¹⁹

The representatives of the governments who gathered regularly at Geneva had no such faith, and among statesmen, trust in the League safeguards began to weaken with the passage of time. Member States were soon unwilling to accept the automatic obligation to resist aggression which the constitution of the League imposed on them. This was recognised in 1923 in a resolution passed by the Assembly to the effect that it was for each State to decide for itself in what degree, if any, its military forces should be employed in resisting acts of aggression against other members. Although not unanimous, this resolution did become generally recognised.²⁰

But in League politics, this new fundamental doctrine of safeguards was for the time secondary to two problems of immediate urgency, both of which greatly influenced later British policy. The first, that of disarmament, was being enforced in Germany and the Peace Treaty intended that the other Powers should follow this by a general limitation of their own forces. There was, indeed, a definition in the Covenant of what should be the new standard of armaments which was "the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations."²¹ In this declaration, the Allied Powers, or at least a majority, were then perfectly sincere. Disarmament was desirable and was necessary to lighten the national budgets of the several countries. But, as the record indicates in the events that followed, collective action was first deferred and then abandoned.

Since the inauguration of the League of Nations in 1920, Britain had taken seriously the obligations incurred under the Covenant, more particularly those involving the reduction of armaments, and this tendency had been further encouraged by the increased economic burdens on the domestic scene.²² In an honest but fatal endeavor to achieve universal disarmament, successive British Governments reduced the armaments to a point at which many believed them to be no longer compatible with the demands of national defense, in the vain hope that others would be moved to emulate such an example of unilateral rectitude.²³

While the Conservative opposition to large armaments was to a large degree prompted by a desire to keep public expenditures low, the Liberal and Labor opposition, as the chief exponents of the pacifist sentiment in the

¹⁹ In this regard, see the remarks by Maurice Baumont, *La Faillite de la Paix, 1918—1939*, 2nd ed (Paris, 1946), pp. 159—181. 700—720.

²⁰ *The Times* (London), November 3, 1924.

²¹ See David H. Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant* (New York, 1938); and Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 360—79.

²² Cmd 1581. See also Arthur Sweetser, "The First Ten Years of the League of Nations." *International Conciliation*, No. 256, pp. 5—60.

²³ Rolland A. Cheput, *Disarmament in British Foreign Policy* (London, 1935).

country, was decidedly in favor of reducing Britain's armaments.²⁴ British public was told, in never-ending variations, that peace depended on disarmament.

The story of the second problem that faced the League, that of reparations, was instructive. It was not until April of 1921 — fifteen months after the signing of the Peace Treaty — that the Reparations Commission fixed the indemnity which was to be paid by Germany. A first payment was made and in the following years there was a partial moratorium. Meanwhile, the Allied Powers had not decided how to deal with their debts to one another and to the United States. In August, 1922, Mr. Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, informed the Allies who were indebted to Britain that his Government was prepared to abandon all further claims to reparations from Germany and repayment of war debts if those questions formed a part of a general settlement including the United States. Bonar Law, who succeeded Lloyd George, went even further when he stated that Britain was prepared to accept a final settlement that left Britain burdened with an "indemnity"—that is, paying more to America than she received from her war debtors.²⁵

M. Poincare, then head of the French Government, loathed the British attitude and took the earliest opportunity of showing all how Germany could be brought to her senses. In December of 1922, a delay in the delivery of reparation timber was brought before the Reparations Commission and, against British opposition, Germany was declared in default. French and Belgium troops at once marched into the Ruhr and remained many months. The results were disastrous for there were political disorders, trade collapsed and the Mark became worthless.²⁶

Out of this came Dawes Plan.²⁷ At once the European outlook brightened and statesmen were encouraged to make fresh efforts to find safeguards against war. But it was outside the League, in Germany, that the most encouraging development appeared. In 1922 and 1923, the Berlin Government had suggested to France that there should be mutual guarantees against aggression.²⁸ The proposal was made again early in 1925 to both Britain and France. Italy and Belgium were brought into the negotiations. The Locarno Treaty emerged from these discussions and Britain was pledged to go to the assistance of either France or Germany if aggression took place by one against the other.²⁹ The treaty served its immediate purpose and Sir

²⁴ For example, see speech by the Marquess of Londonderry, Newcastle-upon Tyne, June 26, 1936, *The Times*, June 27, 1936; Winston Churchill, H of C, *Parl. Deb.*, V. 286, March 8, 1934, col. 2073; Hugh Dalton, *Ibid.*, V. 250, March 26, 1931, col. 599.

²⁵ In this regard, Mr. Nicolson noted that there always was a time lag between the thoughts of British leaders and the thoughts accepted by opinion. So it was that the Government was accused of being pro-German until opinion caught up. Harold Nicolson, "The Foreign Service," III, *The Political Quarterly*, v. 7, 1936, pp. 208—22.

²⁶ *Cmd 1812* and 1943. See also *The Times*, December 28, 1922.

²⁷ *Cmd 2184*.

²⁸ F. E. Langermann, *Information on the Problem of Security, 1917—1926* (1927), Part IV.

²⁹ The relevant documents are contained in *Cmd 2435*, *Cmd 2468* and *Cmd 2525*. See also Fritz Berber, *Locarno: a collection of documents* (1936).

Austen Chamberlain, who had had such a great part in framing the treaty, described it as the dividing line between the years of war and the years of peace.³⁰

For a short time, it seemed that this forecast might be justified. Under the leadership of Dr. Stresemann, Germany was entering into friendly relations with her neighbors. In 1926, Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. In 1927, the Ambassador's Conference declared that Germany had fulfilled the disarmament obligations, and in the following year, Germany was a party to the Kellogg Peace Pacts which renounced war as an instrument of national policy. In 1929, German representatives sat on the Commission which produced the Young Plan for what was hoped would be a final settlement of reparations and a step toward relieving tension in Europe.³¹

Dr. Stresemann died in October of 1932. Whether later events would have taken a different course had he survived and remained at the head of the German Government has been and will long be the subject of historical speculation. He had brought Germany back into the community of nations, her currency had been strengthened and foreign troops were no longer on German soil. Dr. Brüning, who succeeded Dr. Stresemann, did his best against strong and bitter opposition, of which Hitler was the most active leader.

Meanwhile, the League of Nations began an intensive effort to secure some degree of world disarmament. Six years had passed since the Locarno Pact and almost nothing had been done in the way of disarmament. Britain alone had gone ahead and popular feeling in Britain for League controlled disarmament continued to grow.³²

While the Disarmament Conference ground out proposals, world conditions grew worse. In 1933, Japan served notice of withdrawal from the League and Hitler became Chancellor of Germany.³³ Shortly thereafter, Germany withdrew from the Conference as well as from the League. The General Committee of the Conference met in May, 1934, but positive results by then were impossible. And yet the movement for disarmament continued to grow in Britain.³⁴

An interesting note on the situation in the Far East is that even before the advent of the Roosevelt Administration in 1933, the American Government had begun to appreciate the implication of the international situation.

³⁰ Sir Austen Chamberlain, H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 185, June 24, 1925, col. 1580.

³¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 185, June 24, 1925, col. 1580.

³² For example, see the second British memorandum to the Committee on Arbitration and Security, February 1929 *Documents on the Preparatory Commission for Disarmament*, p. 184.

³³ Professor Shotwell analysis British opinion briefly in regard to early Japanese acts of aggression. Shotwell, "Trends in British Public Opinion," *On the Rim of the Abyss*, pp. 180-91; J. J. Burns, "Conditions of Withdrawal from the League of Nations," *American Journal of International Law*, XXIX, pp. 40-50.

³⁴ See Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 365-79; H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 250, March 26, 1931, col. 589; *The Times*, July 28, 1931.

Mr. Henry L. Stimson, the American Secretary of State, had made a strong but unsuccessful effort to establish joint action between Britain and the United States to check Japanese aggression in the Far East. It is altogether probable that positive action at that time would have been approved by the American people and that thereby the system of collective security might have been saved. The British Government, unfortunately, failed to make the most of the opportunity and therefore assumed the chief responsibility for what in retrospect appears as little short of tragic. Nonetheless, the United States at that time advanced the doctrine of nonrecognition of territorial changes brought about by force and thus established a deterrent to aggression which, while obviously not decisive, was far from being a negligible factor in international relations.³⁵

Meanwhile, in Britain and on the Continent, the policies of Drs. Stresemann and Brüning had commanded considerable support in Britain and elsewhere. It was believed by many that had concessions been made to the Weimar regime in regard to reparations and armaments, the party which Hitler led would have been deprived of much of its propaganda and might never have been able to seize the power in Germany and been a cause of World War II.³⁶

Thus when the Weimar Republic perished on January 30, 1933, those former friends of Germany in Britain found themselves perplexed and confused.³⁶ Nowhere was its effect on party alignment more conspicuous than in Britain. There emerged two schools of opinion, between which there could be no compromise. One, a faction very small initially, held that the establishment of the Nazi party had changed the entire situation and that the forces bent on aggression must be resisted. In the years following 1933 and the Nazi persecution of German socialists, trade unionists and liberals, a strong reaction was produced in Britain among the Liberals and Laborites who had hitherto been the strongest advocates of Germany's cause and the Leftist parties in Britain thereafter shifted over gradually to the anti-German side.³⁶ Hence, within a month following Munich most opinion in Britain was in this group.

The other group argued that if the Treaty of Versailles had been unjust before 1933, it was equally unjust in the years following, and that, if the more forceful and just demands of Hitler for treaty revision were met forthright, Germany might still be retained as an active and cooperative member of the European community.³⁷ This group further believed that the interests of Britain were more closely allied with those of Germany than of

³⁵ See especially Henry L. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis* (New York, 1936).

³⁶ See John Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, p. 231.

³⁷ Interestingly enough, Kingsley Martin pointed out in regard to the Reichstag fire that the entire British press, with the exception of the *Daily Express* and the *Morning Post* held the Nazis themselves responsible for the fire. Kingsley Martin, "Public Opinion: The Reichstag Fire," *The Political Quarterly*, V. 4, 1933, pp. 587-94.

³⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 276, April 13, 1933, col. 2742; H of L, *Ibid.*, V 41, July 22, 1920, col. 431. See also Wolfers, *Britain and France between Two Wars*, pp. 214-5.

³⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 276, April 13, 1933, col. 2742.

France and they welcomed the emergence of a strong German Government as an added barrier against the spread of communism into Western Europe.⁴⁰

Closely tied into the problem at the beginning of the period and one which continued to exert influence on political developments throughout the period under study was the economic crisis which swept over Europe in the early Thirties. The first effect of this crisis in the majority of European states was a temporary resort to state power. However, only in those countries which had come out of the first World War with seriously undermined political and economic stability, did the economic crisis and its aftermath serve immediately to encourage the establishment of authoritarian regimes.

Once the increased role of the government in controlling the national economy was accepted as a reality, political thinkers began to look around for new concepts with which to define the relations of state and society. The background underlying the measures of Mr. Roosevelt's New Deal and of Mr. MacDonald's National Coalition in Britain represented the most moderate forms taken by this trend of thought. Such measures were considered to involve the application to social and economic problems of Government authority under full democratic responsibility and to provide a basis on which new relationships of state and society could be developed without a sacrifice of political democracy.

While Socialist parties grew rapidly in most European countries, in France, Germany, and parts of Eastern Europe, Communism achieved a position of strength which it had not known since the early Twenties, the authoritarian doctrines were more closely attuned to the temper of the Thirties. This authoritarianism relied on national feeling and on the power of an efficient bureaucracy and police to inspire confidence and hope among Europe's desperate peoples. German National Socialism was the most characteristic of these authoritarian doctrines. The ultimate goals of these doctrines were vague as compared to socialism and communism and they relied more on the satisfaction of immediate needs than on a rational consideration of Europe's problems.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the world depression was as important as any other factor in the political upheaval of Europe which brought about the currents of force and violence and on the other hand, fear of war and unrealistic disarmament on the part of the democracies, all of which led down the path to war. The revival of German nationalism with its openly avowed aim of upsetting the peace settlement established at Versailles and the growing weakness of the League brought new problems of security in the early Thirties and foreign policies had to be adjusted to meet the new situation.

⁴⁰ One Member of Parliament expressed the commonly held opinion that it was useless to deny to a nation of 65 million people a status in the world equivalent to its capacity and size. See Sir Erward Gregg, "A British Peace Lead," *The Spectator*, V. 151, 1933, p. 955; and Lord Howard of Penrith, *The Prevention of War by Collective Action* (1933).

Thus, as a result of the depression, or at least to some extent, British opinion was more or less favorably influenced toward the new German Government. Many in Britain believed that Hitler's Government would bring a better living standard to the German people. It took many years to convince the British people that the new German Government would be so violent and disregarding of the basic human rights. Initially, then, British opinion had great faith in the new government at Berlin.

While mention has previously been made of the American attitude and the Far Eastern crisis of 1931, some note of the League action on that problem should be mentioned because of its influence on British opinion in subsequent crises. Relations between China and Japan had been far from cordial when a series of minor incidents in the summer of 1931 increased the tension. The climax came on September 18, 1931, when the Japanese occupied the city of Mukden and in the following week, all the cities of South Manchuria.

Immediately after the occupation of Mukden, China appealed to the League of Nations, invoking Articles X, XI, and XV of the Covenant. Under these articles, it was the duty of the League to investigate, report and make recommendations for a settlement of the dispute. The Council obtained the promise of the Japanese authorities to withdraw their troops into the Railway Zone. However this was never done. Further attempts to mediate peace led to the appointment in December, 1931, of a Commission headed by Lord Lytton and with members from Britain, France, Italy, Germany and the United States, for the purpose of investigating the situation on the spot.

Meanwhile fighting broke out in Shanghai. Thereupon the Chinese Government again appealed to the League. A Special Committee of Nineteen was appointed by the Assembly of the League to study the problem. The immediate crisis in Shanghai was settled when the Committee of Nineteen was able to arrange an armistice. As to the other questions in dispute between China and Japan, it was decided to wait for the Lytton Committee's report. This report, released in 1932, recognized the fact that Japan had special interests in Manchuria, but recommended that this territory remain under Chinese control.

Meanwhile, Japan had recognized Manchukuo as an independent state. Since the League's recommendations struck squarely at this arrangement, Japan gave notice of its withdrawal from the League and renewed hostilities with China.

The League had been unable, then, to change the situation in Manchuria, but at least the fighting there had stopped. No one was disposed to stir up additional work for the League, and the Powers contented themselves with refusing to recognize the new state of affairs. The United States, as previously noted, had publicly proclaimed on January 7, 1932, that it would follow a policy of non-recognition in regard to "any situation, treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the covenants

and obligations of the Pact of Paris." In this belated attempt to put teeth into the Pact of Paris, the United States thereupon called on all nations to sit in judgment on the question whether or not a power had acted in self-defense. No power was to recognize the results of aggressive action, but this suggestion, as indicated above, was received with little enthusiasm. This was the prelude for British opinion and the world, but faith in the League was strong.

Such were the constituent elements of the British attitude towards the Axis Powers and toward the world situation at the beginning of the period under study. Other factors, combined with the previously indicated elements, were added with the passage of time. This was the background at the beginning of a policy pursued by Britain and others as well, which slowly emerged as the policy of appeasement and which ended only in the shadow of war. The following pages will endeavor to indicate how opinion, at first, either indifferent or supporting appeasement, later opposing it, influenced British policy and, in turn, the history of Europe during this period.

PART I

THE BEGINNINGS OF APPEASEMENT

CHAPTER I

OPINION FROM 1933 TO 1935

While historians still debate the actual date that appeasement appeared in British policy, probably the first movement toward appeasement as such which affected opinion was that which was set in motion by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.¹ Late in 1932, Mussolini suggested the idea of a pact between Britain, France, Germany and Italy for settling the tensions of Europe and maintaining the peace. Mr. MacDonald, in March of 1933, felt that it was time to follow up that suggestion.² Thus, early in 1933, Mr. MacDonald discussed the idea with M. Daladier in Paris while he was enroute to Geneva and from there, he traveled on to Rome.³

The visit of the two British leaders was seized upon by Mussolini as an opportunity to present a draft of a Four-Power Pact which was carried back with the British statesmen.⁴

As originally conceived, the Pact claimed to present "an effective policy of cooperation among the four powers in order to maintain the peace," but as some people in Britain pointed out, the Pact omitted any mention of the Covenant, recognized the claim of Germany to equality in arms, and called for further treaty revision, ignored Russia and attempted to establish a Western European order consisting of the strongest nations—one of which was Germany.⁵

Russia had viewed with alarm the terms of the pact which omitted her. As a result, Russia began laying the foundation for a series of alliances with France and the smaller countries of Eastern Europe, in what was hoped would become an "Eastern Locarno." Meanwhile, Poland made speed in the race for appeasement and signed a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany on January 26, 1934, and at the same time, made overtures with Russia.

¹ Wheeler-Bennett in *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, pp. 235—7 also describes this as the opening wedge on the path to appeasement on Britain's part.

² Mussolini suggested the Pact in a speech at Turin, October 23, 1932. *The Times*, October 24, 1932.

³ *The Times*, March 11, 1933.

⁴ *The Times*, March 19, 1933.

⁵ Wheeler-Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

In spite of all efforts to keep the terms of the Pact secret, they appeared in the press and were discussed in the House of Commons. The press was roughly divided into three groups during this incident. The first group, which included the *Daily Herald*, the *News-Chronicle* and the *Manchester Guardian*, all of whom were strong supporters of the League, criticised the Pact on two scores: first, that such a pact was not necessary within the League framework; and second, that Germany was given equal status when she had not yet indicated to the world that she was ready to cooperate with other nations.⁶

The second group, consisting of *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* hailed the Pact as a means of strengthening the League and ensuring peace. These papers believed that Germany should be admitted into the family of nations as an equal.⁷

The third group was "isolationist" and included the *Observer* and all the Rothermere and Beaverbrook press. The *Observer* noted that if the Pact could help Britain stay out of war, it was worth the effort and at the same time called for no further support for the League. The *Daily Mail* and *Evening News*, while hailing the theme of keeping out of war, welcomed the recognition of Germany and the *Daily Express* and *Evening Standard* called for British intervention only if British interests were threatened.⁸

The Pact was the opening manifestation on the part of British Conservatives to the idea of grouping the four Western Powers together in some form of close relationship.⁹ The effect was disastrous for not only was Europe not ready for such a pact, but also too many in Britain still opposed concessions to Germany, especially those made outside the League framework.¹⁰ As a result then of public discussion and opposition to the terms and the disunity aroused in Western Europe, the Pact was signed in June, 1933, but was virtually meaningless and never became effective.¹¹ However it was valuable in that it indicated the probable course of British foreign policy and more important, it indicated a large segment of British opinion that was prepared to appease Germany.

⁶ *Daily Herald*, March 27, 1933; *News Chronicle*, March 24, 1933; *Manchester Guardian*, April 2, 1933.

⁷ *The Times* (London), March 27, 1933; *Daily Telegraph*, March 28, 1933.

⁸ *The Observer*, April 4, 1933; *Daily Mail*, March 27, 1933; *Evening News*, April 2, 1933; *Daily Express*, March 27, 1933; *Evening Standard*, April 11, 1933.

⁹ See Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars*, pp. 262-3.

¹⁰ In this connection, Alfred Rosenberg, visiting London in May, 1933, as Hitler's personal representative, was denounced in the British press, snubbed by the British Prime Minister and forced to cut short his stay because of these humiliations. See *The Times*, May 9, 10, and 15, 1933.

¹¹ On the negotiations for the Four Power Pact, see Wheeler-Bennett, *The Pipe Dream of Peace: the story of the collapse of disarmament* (1935), Chapter VIII, while a comparative table of British, French and Italian drafts and the German amendments and the final text are contained in the Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Documents on International Affairs*, 1933, pp. 240-49.

GERMANY'S DEFIANCE OF THE LEAGUE AND OPINION

Upon Hitler's act of defiance in leaving the Disarmament Conference and the League later in 1933,¹² the extent to which disunity of opinion had developed not only among the Powers, but within the Powers as well, particularly in Britain, was disclosed. While from the Conference itself came only an expression of regret and hardly one of anger. French opinion was indifferent and the Government was divided. The effect in Central and Southeastern Europe was fatal because the groups within those countries which urged friendship with Hitler were strengthened.

During the same period on the other side of the Atlantic, President Roosevelt's first debut in matters of foreign affairs was in no sense a promising one, from the standpoint of participation in world affairs and effective American support in collective actions.

At the time of his inauguration he had already ceased to profess support for the League, and it has often been pointed out that, as a political realist, Roosevelt was determined to avoid the disaster that overtook President Wilson. His handling of the London Economic Conference of 1933 was not up to standard and seems to have disgusted Mr. Roosevelt with European affairs. However a major power like the United States could not stand wholly aloof from world affairs. The American Government, supported by the public, continued to use its best influence in the cause of disarmament, more liberal trade policies and the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Frequently this influence, as for example, in the matter of sanctions against Italy during the Ethiopian crisis, lacked clarity, not to say vigor, while the course pursued in Spain during the Civil War, on the other hand, can hardly be described as a contribution to the strengthening of democracy abroad. The policy appeared to be based on no entanglements and no war.

At this time in Britain, there was no singleness of thought. On one side, the *Daily Express* was supporting a campaign for no British entanglements in Europe.¹³ However, most of the press with the exception of the Rothermere papers, appeared to follow the lead given by *The Times* which stated that,

... It is the first duty of other Governments to show him (Hitler) that the ways of the swashbuckler and the hothead will bring him no success in diplomacy.¹⁴

The immediate reaction in Britain to this crisis was one of anxiety as to whether war would come to Europe, and if so, whether Britain could

¹² See *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, VI, C-140; Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, pp. 213-4.

¹³ *Daily Express*, October 8, 1933; see also Kingsley Martin, "The Foreign Policy of the *Daily Express*," *Political Quarterly*, V, 4, 1933, pp. 438-41.

¹⁴ *The Times*, October 15, 1933; *Daily Telegraph*, October 19, 1933; *News Chronicle*, October 18, 1933; see also "If Germany Rearms," *The Spectator*, October 13, 1933, pp. 468-9.

remain out of it. There was a keen sense of popular resentment against Germany for having precipitated the crisis, and certain extremist factions in Britain openly advocated the use of sanctions against Germany, which would have ranged from economic boycotts to outright intervention and preventative war.¹⁵

On the other hand, there was a considerable body of opinion that believed in Germany's case for equality and who, while not condoning Germany's action, still believed in the justice of them. However, it appears that the British Government's action during the crisis probably reflected opinion in Parliament and in the country.¹⁶

With opinion divided as it was between those who believed that Germany's case was a just one and those who felt that Germany's demands represented a threat to the peace of Europe, the Government could only adopt a middle course.¹⁷ One publication appeared to sum up the average opinion in Britain with

... A National Government is in power and it can unquestionably carry the country with it in a declaration that the German demand for equality, as set out in a singularly temperate language on October 6, is reasonable and must be conceded . . .¹⁸

It was evident, then, that unless checked by force, Germany had every intention of rearming, and the British Government, in full recognition of the fact that it would not have the full support of opinion in taking forceful action to halt Germany, endeavored to achieve with France a common policy for the legalization and regulation of German rearmament.

For most opinion, then, the real issue behind all the talk was whether and how far Germany was to be allowed to achieve equality through rear-

¹⁵ *Morning Post*, November 1, 21, 1933; "If Germany Rearms," *The Spectator*, October 13, 1933, pp. 468-9; "Letter to *The Times*," *The Times*, December 19, 1933. Kingsley Martin noted that late in 1933 at the Annual Conservative Conference at which a demand was made by a large majority for an immediate increase in the armed forces, by a significant coincidence, the same demand appeared in the British press, led by the *Rothermere* papers and soon followed by the rest of the Conservative press. Mr. Martin included a detailed analysis of the press on this coincidence. K. Martin, "Public Opinion: The Armament Ramp," *Political Quarterly*, V, 5, 1934, pp. 123-9.

¹⁶ Winston Churchill, "The Gathering Storm," *The Second World War*, V, 1, pp. 60-1. In this volume, Mr. Churchill writes the history of the years between wars, during most of which he was a spectator, but a highly privileged spectator and one whose keen insight and innumerable friendships give much weight to his opinions, although a spectator all the same.

¹⁷ A good analysis of opinion in this period is found in "England and the Continent," *Political Quarterly*, V, 4, 1933, p. 379. One publication rightfully noted that the Government was assured of a majority with a policy of no isolation, no alliances and the pursuit of every kind of promising mediation. "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 10, 1933, p. 649. See also the *Manchester Guardian*, November 5, 1933.

¹⁸ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 24, 1933, p. 753. The swing of voters in the Rusholme and Stamford by-elections was an indication of public opinion for while it is noted that the Government candidates were elected, their majorities were not great and while indicating that peace and disarmament were popular, whether the average voter meant peace through a precarious isolation or through a world organization was the question and which became a major issue in the Peace Ballot of 1935. See the *Daily Express*, October 27, 1933; *Daily Herald*, October 29, 1933.

mament.¹⁹ All indications were that the British Cabinet as well as opinion in the country, were prepared in spite of Sir Simon's denials, to allow Germany to acquire so-called defensive weapons which Britain and France were not ready to abandon through disarmament. For opinion in Britain, the acknowledgement of Germany's rearmament as part of the conclusion of a Disarmament Conference was a gloomy one. However, it was recognized that if the rest of the nations met the Germans even half-way, the way was open to a substantial reduction in the world's armaments as a whole. The debate in the House of Commons late in 1933 indicated the fear of increased air armaments and the prospect of more expenditures on all types of arms unless some agreement could be reached.²⁰

However, it was still too early for the British Government, as far as opinion was concerned, to come out openly for German rearmament. This was indicated by the attitude of the press as well.²¹ Apparently the Prime Minister realized what his position would have been before organized religious opinion and what was called the disarmament opinion, a very powerful group, had he openly given his blessing to rearmament for Germany.²²

As 1933 drew to a close, it was evident that opinion in Britain, particularly as represented in Parliament, favored a middle course. Opinion in the House of Commons was considerably relaxed by Sir Simon's statement regarding the adjournment of the Disarmament Conference in that a definite policy of encouraging negotiations at the critical point in Franco-German relations had been adopted.²³ British opinion in general was anxious for some definite action along the lines of a policy of constructive neutrality. This was indicated by numerous speeches in the House and comments in the

¹⁹ It was asserted that opinion was concerned over this, because past history indicated Germany's intent. "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, October 6, 1933, p. 429.

²⁰ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, December 1, 1933, p. 789. The result of the East Fulham by-election of November, fought around the Government's foreign policy including disarmament, appeared to support the Government because the votes cast for the Government candidate nearly equaled the number received at the last General Election. *Daily Herald*, November 27, 1933. See also "This Country's Choice," *The Spectator*, December 29, 1933, p. 952.

²¹ Sir Austen Chamberlain observed that "not only was there great uncertainty among our own people who were restless and unhappy because they did not know the principles on which our policy was based." H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 284, December 18, 1933, col. 793-4. See also comments in "This Country's Choice," *The Spectator*, December 29, 1933, p. 952; *News-Chronicle*, December 15, 1933 *Manchester Guardian*, December 21, 1933.

²² "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, December 1, 1933, p. 789; *Daily Herald*, November 26, 1933; *Evening Standard*, December 3, 1933. One publication observed that the Government's hesitations were surprising, for it was noted that nothing could have restored the Government's slightly waning popularity more effectively than an unequivocal declaration of its purpose to cooperate to the full with every nation and in removing international tensions throughout the world. "This Country's Choice," *The Spectator*, December 29, 1933, p. 952.

²³ Strangely enough, the Marquess of Lothian anticipated the post-World War II international organization when he noted that the notion of peace based on a strong Britain and a Strong British Navy had disappeared with the coming of science and he concluded with "May it not be that events will force us within the next generation to form a still larger commonwealth of nations not for peace and security alone, but to give its citizens assured prosperity also?" "Parliament or Dictatorship," *The Spectator*, October 6, 1933, pp. 436-7.

press as a whole greeted with disapproval any tendency to develop neutrality into partisanship for either side.²⁴

No penalty was exacted from Germany for her open defiance of the Allied Powers. Britain and France embarked on an out-and-out appeasement policy toward Hitler and while regretting the necessity, apparently based this policy on the assumption that the more agreements Hitler signed, the more difficult it would be for him to disregard them.²⁵

Hence, by the first month of 1934, the British Government had elaborated new proposals which envisaged the immediate recognition of Germany's equality in armaments.²⁶ These were submitted to the French and would certainly have been accepted had not an internal eruption in France caused their temporary eclipse.²⁷ Opinion in Britain was very interested in the proposals and they became the topic of heated criticism and defense alike as contending groups debated over them.²⁸

The public debate grew more heated during March and April as more information came out of Germany in regard to the extent of rearmament.²⁹ Mr. Eden, as Lord Privy Seal, was making a series of speeches in different centers around the country and he was credited with explaining and retaining the fundamental issues of international affairs of the moment to the British people as no other government spokesman did. It was observed that had it been certain that Mr. Eden's views were shared without reserve by all members of the Cabinet at that time, the whole country would have faced the future with more confidence. He considerably aided the Government's cause by dissipating the notion that security was always some other nation's interest and not Britain's.³⁰

In April, after the Government had denied in the lower House that the heavy increase in German rearmament expenditures indicated that Germany was not only contemplating preparations for defensive equipment, but the

²⁴ See Lord Lloyd, *Daily Mail*, October 20, 1933; *Daily Express*, November 9, 1933; *Daily Herald*, November 12, 1933; *Evening Standard*, November 5, 1933. On October 4, the Annual Labor Party Congress adopted a resolution which pledged the Labor Party "to take no part in war and to resist it with the whole force of the Labor Movement." "Labor and War," *The Spectator*, October 6, 1933, p. 430; see also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, December 1, 1933, p. 788.

²⁵ "This Country's Choice," *The Spectator*, December 29, 1933, p. 952.

²⁶ One publication noted that the concessions to Germany on the principle of parity were considerable. "Splitting the Difference," *The Economist*, February 3, 1934, p. 221.

²⁷ This was at the time of the Stavisky scandals in December, 1933. See Wheeler-Bennett, *Disarmament Deadlock*, pp. 202-3.

²⁸ *Daily Express*, February 8, 1934; *Manchester Guardian*, February 12, 1934; *The Times*, February 10, 1934; *Evening Standard*, February 11, 1934; "Rearmament Debate," *The Economist*, February 10, 1934, p. 290.

²⁹ Part of the press believed that Britain must be able to fulfill her obligations. *Manchester Guardian*, March 5, 1934; "Armed Democracy," *The Spectator*, March 17, 1933, pp. 424-5. Two other trends in the press were observed, namely the picture campaign showing the horrors of war in the *Express* and the movement toward pacifism, as indicated by such groups as "The All Peoples' Association" and "The Committee of International Understanding and Co-operation." *Daily Express*, March 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 1934; *Daily Herald*, March 25, 1934; *News Chronicle*, February 26, 1934; "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, February 16, 1934, p. 222; "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, April 6, 1934, p. 530.

³⁰ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, April 6, 1934, p. 530.

acquisition of offensive arms as well, the Government was exposed to considerable criticism for not halting such action.³¹ The Government was not only accused of a failure to halt the export of airplane engines to Germany, but was charged as well with failure to take part in a proposed security pact at the May meeting of the Disarmament Conference, on which many had based their hopes in bringing about a reduction in armaments.³²

By July of 1934, with the collapse of the Disarmament Conference, examples of Nazi ruthlessness as indicated by the June 30th purge, the German guilt in the assassination of Dollfuss and the open rearmament of Germany, particularly in the air, the British Government almost diffidently introduced a measure to increase Britain's air strength by forty-one squadrons.³³

The Labor Party at once tabled a motion of censure on the Government which voiced regret that the Government "should enter upon a policy of rearmament neither necessitated by any new commitments nor calculated to add to the security of the nation."³⁴ Mr. Attlee further attacked the Government when he noted that the collective strength of the League was sufficient to protect the country,³⁵ and three months later at the Annual Labor Party Conference at Southport, he announced that the Labor Party had "absolutely abandoned any idea of nationalist loyalty."³⁶

Frequent requests in Parliament for information on German rearmament indicated the growing public interest in the matter. However, the Government adopted the policy of playing this matter down as much as possible. For example, early in June after Marshal Petain had told the French Chamber of Deputies of the extent of German rearmament, the British Government was questioned in Parliament in regard to the extent to which Germany had observed the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. Sir Simon's answer to such a line of questioning was that the matter could not be discussed then.³⁷

Later in the year, Mr. Churchill called the House's attention to the existence in Germany of "an illegal air force" which was rapidly approaching equality with Britain's. Mr. Baldwin strongly denied this, though he admitted that an air force did exist in Germany, but he assured the lower House that there was neither "menace" nor "emergency" in the situation.³⁸

³¹ H of C., *Parl Deb.*, V. 304, July 11, 1935, col. 586—92; *Manchester Guardian*, April 10, 1934; *Daily Herald*, April 12, 1934.

³² H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 304, July 11, 1935, col. 592.

³³ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 292, July 26, 1934, col. 1933—7. For an interesting account and a prediction that came true in this regard, see Robert Boothby, "Prospects for the National Government," *Political Quarterly*, V. 5, 1934, pp. 459—68.

³⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 30, 1934, col. 2325.

³⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 30, 1934, col. 2340—51.

³⁶ *Daily Express*, October 18, 1934; *News Chronicle*, October 18, 1934; *Daily Herald*, October 19, 1934.

³⁷ H of C., *Parl Deb.*, V. 292, June 11, 1934, col. 918.

³⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 295, November 28, 1934, col. 883. That Mr. Baldwin was greatly mistaken in his estimates he was to admit frankly later, but this incident is significant at this time because it represented the whole psychology of the Government and a section of opinion in these fateful years. See *Manchester Guardian*, November 29, 1934; *Evening Standard*, November 29, 1934.

Then later in 1934, the settlement of the Saar question and the Government's subsequent handling of this problem greatly increased the Government's popularity with opinion. One publication went on to note that the visible demonstration of the decision of the Government to commit itself within clearly defined limits to the principle of collective security through the League, was very commendable.³⁹

Thus matters stood at the close of 1934. British opinion was influenced by the attitude of other states and internal factors. For example, with the assassination of Louis Barthou late in 1934, the last spark of French resistance to Germany seemed to disappear, while on the other hand, the British Labor Party fought all increased armament expenditures in Britain. With a General Election looming in the then near future and opinion enthusiastically in favor of collective security and peace-as the Peace Ballot would soon indicate-but equally adverse to rearmament, the conduct of British foreign policy was divided between the frank and open appeasement of Sir Simon and the distressed idealism of Mr. Eden.⁴⁰

PEACE SENTIMENT STRONG

Meanwhile in March of 1935, the British Government issued a White Paper on Defense⁴¹ which set forth the Government's record in regard to the "risks of peace", which Britain had incurred as a result of a policy of unilateral disarmament. And it was confessed that "disarming ourselves in advance has not increased our bargaining power in the disarmament discussions at Geneva," and that the Government "could no longer close its eyes to the fact that adequate defences were still required for security."⁴²

For those people who desired rearmament, this at first appeared to be a firm move by the Government to prepare Britain's defenses. However, on a closer examination, it was shown that the increases were very slight which indicated that the Government was confident that rearmament in an election year was unpopular. And the Labor Party presented the confusing paradox of demanding that Britain carry out her collective obligations, yet opposed any increase in armaments.⁴³

However, criticism of the White Paper was by no means confined to the Opposition. Many Conservatives were fearful of some of the references in the Paper to German rearmament.⁴⁴ They took particular exception to that

³⁹ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, December 14, 1934, p. 911. *The Times*, December 9, 1934; *Manchester Guardian*, December 10, 1934.

⁴⁰ Of interest here is the fact that there was resentment over the Bank of England's sizeable loan to Germany which was allegedly used by the Germans for the purchase of munitions. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 304, July 11, 1935, col. 586-92. See also "A Fateful Year." *The Spectator*, January 4, 1935, pp. 4-5.

⁴¹ *Cmd* 4827.

⁴² H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 299, March 11, 1935, col. 46-59.

⁴³ Mr. Attlee moved the motion "that, in the opinion of this House, (this policy) with respect to defence is completely at variance with the spirit in which the League . . . was created to establish a collective world peace . . . and will ultimately lead to war." H of C., *Ibid.*, March 11, 1935, col. 35.

⁴⁴ Mr. Cleary noted that in view of the general attacks made on the policy, the Government was shocked into the recognition that recent declarations of its policy on arms was contrary to the feeling of opinion. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 299, March 14, 1935, col. 690.

part of the paper where references were made to rearmament "despite the provisions of Part V of the Versailles Treaty." It was recalled how Mr. Baldwin had told the House only a few months earlier that while there had been some increase in German arms, he had been careful to avoid charges of a breach of any treaty. As realists, this section of opinion regarded the provisions of that treaty as dead. They felt that if the British forces were so weak, then the Government should have informed opinion sooner than it did.⁴⁵

From another direction, Mr. Churchill voiced sentiments of a large section of opinion when he attacked the Paper on the score of inadequacy. He further went on record and charged that Mr. Baldwin's report in the previous November on German air strength had been very much in error.⁴⁶

Yet such opinions did not represent a majority.⁴⁷ And as *The Spectator* indicated that if the Paper in question was a parade of British intention to abandon an old policy for peace by persuasion and the adoption of a new policy of peace by enforcement, then it was more likely to encourage a war-like spirit in Germany than to appease her.⁴⁸

These debates on rearmament indicated then, that public opinion was concerned over events in Europe and the failure of British foreign policy in dealing with those events. The facts of rearmament by the world, as announced by Mr. Baldwin, were not challenged and his speech on the subject was generally considered at the time to have been instrumental in rallying much of the undecided opinion over to the Government's side. Just as effective was Sir Austen Chamberlain's speech, which stressed support for the League and noted the dangers to peace if Britain was unable to carry out her obligations under Locarno and the Covenant. In these thoughts, he voiced the feelings of British disarmament opinion within the Conservative Party.⁴⁹ Of interest here is that the Opposition, instead of directing criticism at the Government's foreign policy which might have been interpreted as a demand for more armaments, aimed their disapproval at the actual increases in armament expenditures.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *The Times*, March 5, 1935. Interestingly enough, Mr. Lansbury went so far as to actually ask the Government to withdraw the Paper until after the conclusion of the talks with Germany. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 298, March 6, 1935, col. 1949—50. See also Mr. Seton-Watson, *Britain and the Dictators*, p. 235.

⁴⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 299, March 19, 1935, col. 1053—8. See also the *Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1935; *The Times*, March 17, 1935.

⁴⁷ The Labor motion of censure was defeated 424—79. H of C., *Ibid.*, March 11, 1935, col. 162—3. Mr. Cocks expressed some opinion when he noted that the greatest criticism of the Government was for encouraging Germany to rearm and that the Prime Minister at Lausanne had first suggested to Germany that she demand equality and that further, British businessmen were supplying Germany with munitions, plane engines, etc., to such an extent that Germany was indeed a menace to the peace of Europe. H of C., *Ibid.*, March 14, 1935, col. 681—2.

⁴⁸ "The Government and Germany," *The Spectator*, March 8, 1935, pp. 380—1.

⁴⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 299, March 14, 1935, col. 643—5.

⁵⁰ After a challenge as to what the Labor Party would have done in the same situation, Sir Cripps replied that the Labor Party would have taken offensive action against Japan as well as any other aggressor, which indicated that the Labor Party could no longer pose as the peace-party as opposed to the war-mongering Government party, if the statements of party leaders could be taken as indicative of feeling in the rank-and-file. H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 693.

The debates were more interesting for the light that was thrown on the Government's foreign policy and what opinion in Britain thought of that policy. For example, the White Paper was criticized by some not so much for the increase in armaments as for the grounds on which the increase was justified. The Government was denounced for abandoning a policy of collective action and returning to the pre-war practice of reliance on national armaments, which, of course, was denied by the Government.

GERMAN ACTION AND OPINION

On March 15, Hitler announced the unilateral repudiation of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, the reintroduction of conscription and admitted the existence of an air force.⁵¹

Hitler had calculated correctly that neither Britain nor France would do more than protest. While the British and French notes arrived expressing regret that Germany had taken this action,⁵² opinion in Britain, as in France, did not appear to be deeply concerned by Germany's action because the matter of German rearmament had been written off previously as a foregone conclusion. Many people hoped that with the elimination of one of the alleged injustices of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany might once again cooperate with other nations.⁵³

There was even some resentment towards the French by some in Britain for raising the question of Germany's conscription declaration under Article XI of the Covenant, inasmuch as all were concerned with getting Germany back into the League. Mr. Eden admitted that since Germany had committed a breach of the Treaty of Locarno, France was entitled to take action, and that if she did so, Britain would honor her obligations. The French declined to act, in spite of assurances of Polish support. It appeared then, that opinion in both Britain and France had no desire to go to war over Hitler's latest move.

There was little support in Britain for any punitive measures against Germany, even had the Government considered any such a step. In the House, Sir Simon was able to safely state that, far from cancelling the projected visit of himself and Mr. Eden to Berlin, it was the intention of the Government to press forward with it and he concluded with "... to refuse to do so, to cancel your engagement . . . why, sir, it leads you nowhere."⁵⁴ For the time, opinion seemed to favor this line.⁵⁵

⁵¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 299, March 25, 1935, col. 1588. See also Vera Micheles Dean, "Europe's Struggle for Security," *Foreign Policy Reports*, June 19, 1935; Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, pp. 246-7.

⁵² *The Times*, March 18, 1935; *Daily Herald*, March 18, 1935.

⁵³ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, March 22, 1935, p. 461; *Manchester Guardian*, March 19, 1935; *The Times*, March 19, 1935.

⁵⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 299, March 19, 1935, col. 1063.

⁵⁵ *The Times*, March 21, 1935; *Daily Herald*, March 22, 1935; *Manchester Guardian*, March 21, 1935.

THE STRESA CONFERENCE AND OPINION

Although the Stresa Conference of April, 1935, gave the appearance of a united front against all aggression, nothing in fact was further from the truth. A few days before the Conference, Mr. Baldwin had told the Free Church Council at Llandrindel Wells that,

... This country does not want war and does not mean to have war, and if war can only be stopped by letting the aggressor know that war will not be permitted in Europe, this country will play her part, I am convinced, with the rest of Europe, to see that no aggression shall take place . . .⁵⁶

His statement appeared to express the opinion of the great majority of people of all parties and it was striking evidence of the distance opinion in Britain had moved under the stern compulsion of events for support of the League.⁵⁷

Amid the rumors that came out of the Stresa Conference, the Prime Minister's statement on April 17th in the House of Commons on the discussions at Stresa which not only repeated the thought expressed before the Free Church Council, but also had the effect of calming the "non-committers"—a considerable group. He told the House that,

... We went to Stresa to consider . . . past statements of policy in the light of new and somewhat deteriorated conditions. Many people thought that these new conditions would involve new commitments by Britain. We have assumed none. Without condoning her recent action . . . we have kept the door open for Germany to join as an active partner in . . . a system of collective security in Europe.⁵⁸

These words were for the most part well received by opinion in Britain and while opinion felt that the Stresa Conference had not produced anything solid, it had helped clear the air.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *The Times*, April 9, 1935.

⁵⁷ "Stresa and After," *The Spectator*, April 12, 1935, pp. 596—7.

⁵⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, Vol. 300, April 17, 1935, col. 1253—4.

⁵⁹ See "Great Britain's Commitments," *The Spectator*, April 19, 1935, pp. 644—5. A strange incident occurred during the Stresa Conference which may have been a test of opinion by the Government. Four days after Mr. Baldwin spoke to the Free Church Council, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister warned a Cambridge crowd against a collective system which would entangle Britain in war while at the same time, most of the press, except notably *The Times*, carried the announcement from a high source that Britain opposed new commitments at Stresa. With the Prime Minister and top Foreign Office officials at Stresa, Mr. Eden ill and Mr. Baldwin standing on his Free Church Council statement, there was considerable speculation as to who in London was in a position to make such a pronouncement. Actually it came from Neville Chamberlain and the motive was not revealed. While the statement was technically accurate, except in its emphasis and implication and may have been a desire to placate Conservative isolationists, it aroused a considerable storm and if it was a careful testing of public reaction, the result was a curt official comment from Stresa that no attention should be paid to statements in London when all the authoritative foreign policy spokesmen were in Italy. See "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, April 19, 1935, p. 646; *Daily Herald*, April 10, 1935; *News Chronicle*, April 10, 1935.

OPINION AND THE ANGLO-GERMAN NAVAL AGREEMENT 1935

Meanwhile the Government in March had proposed that "German representatives should come to London for a preliminary discussion with a view to a naval agreement in the future."⁶⁰ It was during the following month that British opinion became alarmed over the news that Germany had undertaken the constructions of 12 submarines.⁶¹ By May, developments in Germany had been such that opinion in Britain despaired of any understanding between the two countries. Mr. Churchill stated that,

. . . It is not only the supreme question of self-preservation that is involved in the realisation of these dangers (from Germany and Italy), but there is also the human and the world cause of the preservation of free Governments and of western civilization against the ever advancing forces of authority and despotism.⁶²

The announcement of Germany's naval, land and air plans was not particularly disquieting, but rather the manifestation of a temper in Germany which seemed to dispel all hope of any genuine cooperation between Germany and Britain.⁶³

Seemingly imperiled by sea as well as in the air, the British public for a time seemed prepared to abandon its power policy and to side with France and Italy in an attempt to array an overwhelming force against the Germans. However, Britain wished to avoid a naval race similar to that of 1914. Therefore, when the widely publicized offer to limit the German Navy to thirty-five percent of Britain's sea power was made by Hitler on May 21, 1935, there was an immediate response from opinion in Britain.⁶⁴

Negotiations between Ribbentrop and the British Government began on June 4th and two weeks later, the two Governments reached an agreement which was published June 18, 1935.⁶⁵

OPINION FAVORS AGREEMENT

The French were shocked by this alleged underhanded deal and felt badly let down by the British, while Russia began a process of disillusion-

⁶⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, Vol. 301, May 2, 1935, col. 574.

⁶¹ *The Times*, April 28, 1935; H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 33-34. See W. T. Stone, "Impending Naval Rivalry," *Foreign Policy Reports*, Vol. 9, April 11, 1935, pp. 191-8.

⁶² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 302, May 31, 1935, col. 1494-6.

⁶³ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 301, May 2, 1935, col. 573-4. An observer noted: ". . . I think we must make up our minds that sooner or later in the years that lie ahead . . . we are going to see Germany gain territory on the continent of Europe and that she is going to get it . . . because none of the great powers . . . will be prepared to fight. Hitler wants to unite the German — speaking peoples — we will have to accept this . . . because she will heavy armaments to back up her policy . . . Therefore we must make it clear now what action will be intolerable to us and at what point we should deem it necessary to fight . . ." H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 302, May 31, 1935, col. 1487-9.

⁶⁴ Cmd 4930. See also David H. Popper, "The End of Naval Disarmament," *Foreign Policy Reports*, VII., October 23, 1935, pp. 202-12.

⁶⁵ *The Times*, June 19, 1935. One school of historians asserts that this was the first overt act of appeasement from which Hitler rose in the attempt at world domination. Anthony Martienssen. *Hitler and His Admirals*, p. 11.

ment and began to believe that Britain would condone all of Germany's actions as long as it did not affect Britain.

In the lower House, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, First Lord of the Admiralty, after calling the agreement a contribution to world peace and international appeasement,⁶⁶ in a later effort to calm apprehension over a possible future German submarine menace, stated that the German representative had

... Stated that Germany is prepared to adhere to the rules regarding submarine warfare as set out in Part IV of the London Naval Treaty, and to accept them for herself irrespective of whether they are adhered to by all other Powers.⁶⁷

His latter statement received an unexpected hostile reception from the Labor Opposition. Mr. Bevin insisted angrily that there was no chance that Germany would honor her undertaking in an emergency.⁶⁸ Labor members of the lower House were not silenced by Sir Bolton's reply that objections to the agreement "meant a policy of despair; no treaty would be made with anybody-it would mean returning to jungle rule."⁶⁹ The distrust of Germany, more vocal and deeply rooted on the Labor benches, was apparent. To these members, the agreement was a violation of the Treaty of Versailles. However, for the most part, the opposition was based on a general dislike for the Government's foreign policy.⁷⁰ Even after it was pointed out by some Conservatives, the Government refused to admit that the small Baltic States were at the mercy of Germany as a direct result of the Agreement.⁷¹

Sir Samuel Hoare, who answered questions for the Government in the House, had to emphatically deny that the Naval Agreement was a serious blunder on the part of Britain.⁷² He had nothing to say to the charge that the Versailles Treaty obligations of Germany could not be cancelled out by one state alone.⁷³ While Mr. Mander charged that Mr. Eden had had to spend over a week in explaining away the Agreement to all the nations of Europe,⁷⁴ Mr. Cocks, long an outspoken critic with a great deal of foresight for his time, gave the House an excellent review of the whole situation and he pointed out in what direction and how far Britain's policy was

⁶⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 303, June 21, 1935, col. 705.

⁶⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, June 25, 1935, col. 948-50. It should be noted here that the Government avoided a full-scale debate on the Agreement until July 11th when opinion had calmed somewhat on the issue.

⁶⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 950; H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 304, July 22, 1935, col. 1523-4.

⁶⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 303, June 25, 1935, col. 950. See also the *Daily Mail*, June 22, 1935; *Manchester Guardian*, June 23, 1935.

⁷⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 548-9, col. 709. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, June 28, 1935, p. 1091.

⁷¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 303, June 24, 1935, col. 782-3.

⁷² H of C., *Ibid.*, June 26, 1935, col. 1073-5; June 27, 1935, col. 1273-5.

⁷³ H of C., *Ibid.*, June 27, 1935, col. 1275.

⁷⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1275. The Government denied the charge that the Balkan Powers were greatly disturbed by the increased prestige given to the Nazis by the Agreement. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 304, July 17, 1935, col. 1028.

taking the country.⁷⁵ Other critics pointed out that the Agreement was a serious mistake and noted that since Germany had already rearmed, how would the Government check on the terms of the Agreement?⁷⁶

There was criticism from the Right as well. Mr. Churchill leveled a powerful attack at the Government.⁷⁷ Mr. G. Hall noted inconsistency in the policy when he pointed out that only a few months previously, Britain was a party to the Geneva decision which so strongly condemned Germany for repudiating the land and air clauses of the Treaty of Versailles while on the other hand, issuing a White Paper at the same time which referred to Germany's rearmament as the reason for the standstill of the Disarmament Conference. And yet, the moment Hitler made the naval offer, the Government jumped at it without prior consultation with other countries.⁷⁸ Lloyd George also attacked the Government's stand on the issue.⁷⁹

The Government represented the agreement as a great step forward in naval disarmament, inasmuch as it would "prepare the way for the holding of a general naval conference."⁸⁰ However, the Government had no reply for the charge that Germany had received a free hand to begin naval construction and would certainly provoke competitive building by Britain to keep ahead in modern tonnage.⁸¹

The press was divided into three general groups on the issue. The first group, which included the *News Chronicle*, the *Daily Herald* and the *Manchester Guardian*, strongly criticized the agreement. These publications thought that Germany should not have been allowed any rearmament under any circumstances and only limited defensive armaments under full League control.⁸²

The second group, consisting of *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* strongly backed the agreement and predicated that a new era of good feeling was beginning in the relations between Britain and Germany. *The Times*, in particular, appeared to be very sympathetic to the German cause during this incident.⁸³

⁷⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 586-92, July 11, 1935. Mr. Cocks stated that he almost wished that Sir Simon was back as Foreign Secretary, for although he was not good, Sir Samuel Hoare, in less than three weeks, had broken the Stresa front, very nearly wrecked the League and appeared to prefer Hitler to British honor. H of C., *Ibid.*, July 10, 1935, col. 380. There was resentment that Germany should be allowed to have planes in two years' time when she already had them. H of C., *Ibid.*, July 11, 1935, col. 592.

⁷⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 22, 1935, col. 1523-4.

⁷⁷ Mr. Churchill noted that German tonnage would all be new, while British tonnage outdated. H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1499-1501.

⁷⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 304, July 22, 1935, col. 1499-1501.

⁷⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1526

⁸⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 303, June 20, 1935, col. 552.

⁸¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 304, July 11, 1935, col. 548; July 22, 1935, col. 1497 ff. A. further criticism was that Britain was not entitled to deal with the question of naval limitation independently of the questions of land and air disarmament, but this was rejected by the Government. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 303, June 21, 1935, col. 707.

⁸² *News Chronicle*, June 26, 1935; *Daily Herald*, June 25 and 28, July 5 and 7, 1935; *Manchester Guardian*, June 26 and 29, 1935.

⁸³ *The Times*, June 28, July 3, 8, 11 and 18, 1935; *Daily Telegraph*, July 3 and 8, 1935.

The third group was "isolationist" and included the *Daily Mail*, *Evening News*, *Daily Express*, *Morning Post* and *Evening Standard*, carried the view that Britain, at all costs, must remain out of war.⁸⁴

British reaction, then, to the conclusion of the Agreement, was mixed, but as previously indicated, the Government was able to carry it through the House and this was indicative that opinion for the most was either favorable or indifferent, if we keep in mind the influence of party discipline.⁸⁵

The Spectator probably expressed the average man's feelings on the subject with

. . . It is possible to welcome wholeheartedly the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and at the same time understand the hesitations of the French in regard to it . . . details of the agreement are less important than the fact that a voluntary limitation agreement has actually been concluded — the only one since the War except for the Washington and London Naval Treaties, and the only one in which Germany has been a willing partner . . .⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Daily Mail*, July 22, 1935; *Evening News*, June 28, 1935; *Daily Express*, July 11, 1935; *Morning Post*, June 28, 1935; *Evening Standard*, June 11, 1935.

⁸⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 304, July 1935, col. 1607-8. At one time during the debate, the Opposition even went so far as to inquire of the Government whether or not the agreement could not be cancelled inasmuch as Germany had started construction on two capital ships before the negotiations began. In refusing to cancel it, the Government stated that it regarded the agreement as permanent and definite. H of C., *Ibid.*, July 31, 1935, col. 2631-2.

⁸⁶ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, June 21, 1935, p. 1049. Opinion took note of the fact that *The Times* appeared to have had leading articles week after week and month after month during this period which might easily have been written by Ribbentrop himself while the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Manchester Guardian* consistently during this period stood out against the Government's changed attitude of sympathy toward Germany. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 304, July 11, 1935, col. 587-90; H of C., *Ibid.*, August 1, 1935, col. 2954-6.

CHAPTER II

OPINION IN THE ITALIAN-ABYSSINIAN WAR

As the Mid-Thirties became history, there were the beginnings of an international crime — a crime which before being completely carried out, would indicate to the world the strength of British opinion on an issue of foreign policy. The basic issue was the appeasement or non-appeasement of Mussolini while the crime was Italy's quarrel with Abyssinia.⁸⁷

During the initial stages, that is, until September 11, 1935, the day on which Sir Samuel Hoare startled the world with a strong pro-League speech,⁸⁸ the efforts of Britain and France were directed exclusively toward bringing about a peaceful settlement, acceptable to Italy, the League and Abyssinia.⁸⁹ Yet even during this period, the conciliatory policy desired by Britain was narrowly hedged in by the provisions of the Covenant, which guaranteed the territorial integrity and independence of Ethiopia and promised that country the support of the League in case of a refusal of the Italian terms. And at the same time, Britain and the other League Members, desirous of reaching a friendly compromise, postponed threatening Italy with the weapon of sanctions until it was too late to halt the war.⁹⁰

Before examining the state of British opinion in regard to this problem and what the Government's policy was, it would be well to examine the attitude of other countries on this issue.

In examining the world reaction to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, it is interesting to note that (1) many more countries, especially those in Europe, expressed themselves with greater force, though in some instances with much more brevity, than upon the occasion of Japan's invasion of Manchuria; (2) that the world at large seemed much more interested in this event than in the Japanese action, and (3) that the anti-aggression measures within the League framework and of the United States were put into effect with greater speed.

⁸⁷ For an excellent discussion of the Italian-Ethiopian dispute prior to September 4, 1935, see William Koren, Jr., "Imperialist Rivalries in Ethiopia," *Foreign Policy Reports*, September 11, 1935; Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, V. II.

⁸⁸ Speech by Sir Samuel Hoare. League of Nations, *Verbatim Record of the Sixteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations*, Third Plenary Meeting, September 11, 1935, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Statement by the British Prime Minister, H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 299, March 27, 1935, col. 1899-1900. Official efforts in this regard are found in *Cmd 5044* and *5072*.

⁹⁰ Sir Simon was denying press reports as early as February, 1935, that the British envoy to Ethiopia was pressuring that country to yield to Italy's demands. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 297, February 13, 1935, col. 1903-5; H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 298, February 20, 1935, col. 325.

The answer for this can be readily found. China was far off and only a few European countries had any interest there. Furthermore, China was constantly struggling with civil wars and various factions within China had usually sought the backing of some foreign power. Thus in Manchuria, the two outside powers involved were Japan and Soviet Russia, and both Europe and the smaller democracies of the Western Hemisphere were not fearful of involvement in any possible conflict between those two nations.⁹¹

In the United States, press and public alike were loud and violent in their denunciation of Italy's aggressive act, while officially the United States Government affirmed its neutrality two days after fighting broke out. In France, opinion was somewhat reserved, and again differences in opinion between the "Left" and "Right" were apparent. French official action was based upon three main premises. One, to adhere to the League Covenant; two, not to go one inch further than the Covenant required; and three, to do everything in its power to avoid the placing of sanctions on Italy to avoid trade disruption.

It is interesting to note that Germany, though officially professing no interest in the Ethiopian affair and pledging a policy of strict neutrality, nevertheless expressed through its controlled press great sympathy for Ethiopia and rather scornful disgust for Mussolini. The Vatican interested itself to an extensive degree in the dispute. Precisely, the Vatican proposed a compromise plan, roughly ascribed on previous occasions to M. Laval. However, the Vatican's influence in that affair was not extensive. Soviet Russia stated that it would (1) cooperate fully with the League in whatever steps were necessary to curb Italy, but (2) that it would not collaborate with nor recognize any mandate or protectorate over Ethiopia under League domination. Poland, the "Little Entente", and the "Balkan Entente" pledged support to the League policy, while Hungary and Austria openly opposed sanctions. The Netherlands Government gave wholehearted support to the League policy while Belgium gave less than warm enthusiasm for League action.⁹²

OPINION AND THE ISSUE

Meanwhile in Britain, Mr. Attlee and Mr. Mander for the Opposition demanded that the Government make a clear statement that it would uphold the Covenant and both insisted that the Suez Canal be closed to Italian traffic. These men realized that the whole collective system was in danger and that unless Italy was stopped, Germany would never be stopped.⁹³ These sentiments were supported by the *News Chronicle*, *Daily Herald*, and *Manchester Guardian*.⁹⁴

⁹¹ See especially Henry I. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis*.

⁹² World reaction is fully discussed in Samuel H. Cuff, *The Face of the War 1931-1942*.

⁹³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 302, June 7, 1935, col. 2193-2210.

⁹⁴ *News Chronicle*, June 10, 1935; *Daily Herald*, June 12, 1935; *Manchester Guardian*, June 5, 1935.

Later in June of 1935, Mr. Eden traveled to Paris and Rome. By the time the Government reported on his trip in the House on July 1st, British opinion was openly discussing the issue, due in no small part to the numerous press stories speculating on the possible bargains made by Mr. Eden on his trip.⁹⁵ In the House on July 1st, Mr. Eden admitted that the British people were concerned about the League's future as well as the effect of the Italian-Ethiopian dispute on European peace. He then proceeded to explain the British Government's offer to cede part of British Somaliland to Abyssinia in order to facilitate such territorial and economic concessions by Abyssinia to Italy as might have been involved in an agreed settlement. He added that Mussolini had rejected this offer.⁹⁶

The House was more concerned over the fact that it had not been consulted before the offer for a settlement was made.⁹⁷ During the following weeks, the concern of the House and opinion over the whole matter became more apparent. Three reasons were noted for this criticism over the Government's proposed settlement. First, it created unrest among the natives concerned. Second, it set a very bad precedent and third, the House and public opinion felt left out and wanted to be informed in advance of all such future transfers of British territory.⁹⁸

Even the supporters of the Government, in many cases, criticised the proposal because of the unfavorable publicity the proposed settlement received in the press.⁹⁹ Sir William Davison suggested that the better course would have been for the British Ambassador on the spot to do the suggesting. Then, if that was rejected, nothing more of it would have been heard.¹⁰⁰

However, Sir Samuel Hoare pointed out in a policy statement that the Government would have been criticized at a later time if the effort for peace had not been attempted and he concluded with the note that had the proposal been successful, a majority of the House and the country would have hailed the Government's policy. He stressed that all the Government's endeavors were to save the peace and the League.¹⁰¹

Mr. Eden denied the charges that the Government attempted to go behind the back of France and while he denied as well that a bad precedent might have been set by the settlement, he stated that the main issue was peace and that it was very possible for an African war to spread to Europe.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 303, July 1, 1935, col. 1514.

⁹⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1519-24. See also "A Puzzled People," *The Economist*, April 11, 1935, pp. 489-91. *The Times* supported this view.

⁹⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1523-5.

⁹⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 4, 1935, col. 2004-9; V. 304, July 8, 1935, col. 5-9.

⁹⁹ Generally, all the isolationist press was hostile to the proposal. *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* argued that the proposals had some merit, for had the offer been acceptable, much of the European tension would have disappeared. *The Times*, July 5, 1936; *Daily Telegraph*, July 2, 1935.

¹⁰⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 304, July 10, 1935, col. 382.

¹⁰¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 11, 1935, col. 518-21.

¹⁰² H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 625-30. In this regard, see comments in the *Daily Express*, July 7, 1935, *Evening Standard*, July 12, 1935.

Even Mr. Churchill was highly critical and he asked how it was ever supposed that such an offer would prove attractive to Italy.¹⁰³

Meanwhile, the position of the League was difficult, to say the least. Germany and Italy were still in opposite camps as a result of Mussolini's action in condemning Hitler's lawless actions. Further, France had made certain agreements with Italy early in 1935 which the British public had no knowledge of until much later.¹⁰⁴ Also the British representatives at the Stresa Conference in April of the same year appeared to have said nothing to Italy about the African problem.¹⁰⁵ But the League was forced to take some type of action because its prestige had already suffered as a result of the failure to halt aggression in the Far East.

The crisis had neared its peak when Ramsay MacDonald in June resigned the Premiership and was succeeded by Mr. Baldwin.¹⁰⁶ Upon the failure of the proposal to cede British territory in Africa to any country, the Government was forced to come out with a strong League line.¹⁰⁷ Thus it was seen that the British representatives at Geneva came out very strongly for the League in September. Sir Samuel Hoare, who had stepped into the Foreign Office top post,¹⁰⁸ had during August, 1935, denied in the House that Britain and France had indirectly given Italy a free hand in Abyssinia at the Stresa Conference.¹⁰⁹

During this period, the Opposition was concerned with a certain section of the press which hold the view that the quarrel in Africa was one in which Britain could not be deeply concerned over.¹¹⁰ The press was roughly divided into three groups which more or less remained the same throughout this controversy. The first group, which included the *News Chronicle*, the *Daily Herald* and the *Manchester Guardian*, consistently supported the League and the Covenant. For example, Vernon Bartlett argued that the slight risk of war then was preferable to the certainty of a general war that was sure to follow if the League collapsed.¹¹¹

The second group, consisting of the *Daily Telegraph*, and *The Times*, found, like the Government, far more reason for supporting the Covenant

¹⁰³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 546-7.

¹⁰⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 309, February 24, 1936, col. 10-1; February 25, 1935, col. 275.

¹⁰⁵ In this regard, see Sir Samuel Hoare's denial, H of C., *Ibid.*, Vol. 304, August 1, 1935, col. 2934.

¹⁰⁶ *The Times*, June 14, 1935.

¹⁰⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 303, June 6, 1935, col. 200. For a survey of the Government's policy during the Ethiopian crisis, see the Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, II. A typical view was voiced in the lower House by General Sir Henry Croft when he said: "Italy has some claims regarding tribal raids on her colony. We cannot neglect the fact that we have for years past always ourselves agreed that Italy had some special interests in Abyssinia which is not the case with other countries." H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 301, April 24, 1935, col. 689.

¹⁰⁸ There was strong feeling at the time that Mr. Eden should have received the post, but apparently his appointment was blocked by Neville Chamberlain. "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, June 14, 1935, p. 1003.

¹⁰⁹ H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 304, August 1, 1935, col. 2934.

¹¹⁰ Speech by Mr. Dingle Foot, H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2918-9.

¹¹¹ "Britain Stands Firmly by the League," *News Chronicle*, August 23, 1935; "Britain and the League," *Daily Herald*, August 28, 1935.

in the Abyssinian dispute than they had in the case of Japan's invasion of Manchuria. While the *Telegraph* urged a compromise with Italy and an avoidance of a life-and-death test of the League,¹¹² *The Times*, as in the past and as it would do in the future, made a great contribution by publishing a remarkable series of letters from its readers which covered the entire field of controversy over the dispute. From the point of view of a study of British opinion, the most striking feature of this correspondence and of *The Times* itself was the insistence that while Italy was wrong to go to war in order to expand her empire, both Italy and Germany had a real grievance in their lack of colonies. In general, the attitude of *The Times* had hardened toward Italy since the previous Paris talks, when it had urged a boycott of key war materials on Italy.¹¹³

The third group was "isolationist" and included all the Rothermere and Beaverbrook press and the *Observer*. While the *Daily Mail* and *Evening News* were frankly fascist in their attitude, the *Daily Express* and *Evening Standard* hammered at the theme of keeping out of war. The *Morning Post* called for calmness and negotiations with Italy, while the *Observer* called for rearmament, no support for the League, and war only if the British Empire was attacked.¹¹⁴

Early comment in the press on Sir Samuel Hoare's speech at Geneva in which he stated that Britain's policy was one of "steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression," noted that his words indicated little appreciation of the gravity of the situation in Europe. Only *The Spectator* was more pessimistic and warned that war appeared to be more of a real possibility than most of the press admitted.¹¹⁵

Some months later, his speech and its effect on opinion was noted in the House of Commons with,

In July, no one was particularly interested in Abyssinia. It was only in September that the position was made clear, and I would say that I think it is only out of the generosity of his heart that the Foreign Secretary said recently that his speech could not have been made earlier because there would not have been public opinion to support it . . . A public opinion existed in this country, but it was his speech that consolidated that public opinion.¹¹⁶

However, it was too late to halt the war. Italy had gone too far to turn back and war started on October 2, 1935.¹¹⁷ The League then acted with unthought of and unprecedented speed. On October 7, the Council

¹¹² "The African Conflict," *Daily Telegraph*, August 27, 1935.

¹¹³ *The Times*, August 30, 1935.

¹¹⁴ *Observer*, August 25, 1935; *Morning Post*, August 22, 1935; *Daily Express*, August 23, 1935; *Daily Mail*, August 22, 1935; *Evening Standard*, August 23, 1935.

¹¹⁵ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, September 13, 1935, p. 382.

¹¹⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 305, October 23, col. 1935, col. 170-1.

¹¹⁷ *The Times*, October 3, 1935. For a more detailed analysis of British opinion during August, 1935, see Kingsley Martin, "British Opinion and the Abyssinian Dispute," *The Political Quarterly*, V. 6, 1935. pp. 583-90.

declared Italy to be the aggressor and four days later, the Assembly voted to impose economic sanctions.¹¹⁸ President Roosevelt had already put into effect the American neutrality legislation and in a proclamation had enumerated the items on which trade was restricted, mainly arms and munitions.

The League added a few items to this list, but no sanctions were placed on oil or coal. Austria, Hungary, and Albania, all bound to Italy by special trade treaties and other agreements, refused to apply sanctions. Switzerland, in view of her special position as a neutral state, refused to apply sanctions unconditionally, especially in regard to the restriction of imports. Germany, as a non-member of the League, introduced a licensing system under which exports to Italy were prevented from increasing much over previous exports. Although the neutrality legislation forced the United States to restrict trade on some items to both belligerents, Italian trade with the United States increased in other categories.

Italy protested bitterly against the League-sponsored measures and answered with a plan of counter-sanctions. A strict licensing system was established for imports not on the sanction list from countries imposing sanctions. Italian exports to these countries were also restricted. One effect of this was to make it easier for Hitler to expand his trade drive into Southeastern Europe.

At the time there was some resentment in Britain at the Government's previous action of an arms embargo on both Italy and Ethiopia. Some Britains felt that it should have been lifted the first day that the Italians crossed the frontier and it was noted that had the Government done this, it would have been cleared of the one serious reproach in its handling of the whole affair.¹¹⁹

While the League, then, for the first time, adopted a policy of sanctions, Britain was largely responsible for pushing this League action.¹²⁰ It was the British fleet which was most ostentatiously shifted to the Mediterranean, and it was the British Foreign Office which negotiated a series of agreements with France, Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey, which provided for mutual support in case war should arise. Mussolini protested the formation of this Mediterranean block and reserved his bitterest invectives for the British diplomats. In France, the right-of-center groups were definitely anti-sanctionists. They maintained that the British were more interested in protecting their imperial holdings than in backing the League. Heretofore,

¹¹⁸ See H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 308, February 10, 1936, col. 545-6. Shortly before the outbreak of war, the *Daily Mail* which had been urging a free hand for Mussolini, conducted a poll on the question of League action in the event of Italian aggression. In what the *Observer* called a "signal public service," the poll results, out of a total of 70,000 polled, found a quarter of these favored economic sanctions. On the whole, it revealed the number even of *Daily Mail* readers who were content with British policy as very large. *Daily Mail*, October 7, 1935; *Observer*, October 13, 1935; "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, October 18, 1935, p. 598.

¹¹⁹ See Vera Micheles Dean. "The Quest for Ethiopian Peace," *Foreign Policy Reports*, February 26, 1936, p. 319.

¹²⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 308, February 10, 1936, col. 545-6.

it was France that had tried to push League action, particularly when it was a question dealing with Germany. Now the roles were reversed, and the British pushed the League forward while France held back. It appeared that the French leaders who had just established the long coveted closer relations with Italy were loath to see these placed in jeopardy by a policy of sanctions.¹²¹

OPINION DURING THIS PERIOD

Meanwhile, events leading up to the Peace Ballot of 1935 were indicative of the trend of opinion up to the Italian-Abyssinian war. On one side, in the years following 1930, certain sections of opinion in Britain had begun a movement for an isolationist policy similar to that followed by the United States after the First War. As a corollary to their demand for no European commitments, they were led into opposition to the League of Nations. These people demanded that Britain's commitments under the Covenant be restricted or even dropped.¹²²

For example, Mr. Garvin and the *Observer* found weaknesses in the League, while the *Morning Post*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Express* were daily assuring Mussolini that he could defy Britain without any fear. The *Express* remarked that

Britain has no part in the quarrel and should undertake none. Least of all should she embark on any action which would endanger the present friendly relations which exist between Rome and London.¹²³

The more extreme section, headed by Lord Beaverbrook, had suggested that Britain withdraw altogether from the League and concern herself only with British affairs. This body of opinion claimed that most of the country desired this course of action.¹²⁴

Later events indicated that this claim was not correct. This was indicated in February of 1936 when the confidential report of the Maffey Commission was issued. A copy was acquired and published and the re-

¹²¹ See "End This War," *The Economist*, February 22, 1936 pp. 396-7.

¹²² While straw votes must always be handled with caution, they were often more reliable than the assumptions of politicians as to what the ordinary men and women in Britain thought of issues. For example, on January 4, 1934, Mr. Vernon Bartlett, in his usual broadcast talk on foreign affairs, discussed the two alternatives of national isolation on the Beaverbrook lines and the signature by Britain of the League Covenant. Within six days, 20,000 postcards had been received and were still coming in. Of the first 8,000, 89% were in favor of combined action against an aggressor and only 11% favored isolationism. Whatever allowances are made for the fallibility of such attempts to gauge British opinion, the figures were far to striking to be completely ignored in a study of opinion. "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, January 12, 1934, p. 186. However, later when the threat of actual sanctions appeared imminent, a poll conducted by the *Mail* during June, 1935, found that opinion was opposed, to League interference (2 to 1), League economic sanctions (3 to 1), and military action (5 to 1). The same poll favored aggressive British rearming at the amazing figure of 22 to 1, all of which indicated the extent of idealism vs. realism. *Daily Mail*, June 12 and 13, 1935.

¹²³ *Daily Express*, July 5, 1935; see also *Morning Post*, July 8, 1935.

¹²⁴ *Evening Standard*, June 25, 1935. See also Norman Angell, *Defence of the Empire*, pp. 153-5.

sulting storm of public disapproval was tremendous. The report, which recommended giving Italy a free hand in Ethiopia as far as British interests were concerned, aroused a storm of protest from the House of Commons and in many sections of the British press. The Opposition held, probably quite correctly, that the contents of this report met with the approval of Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir John Simon.¹²⁵

THE PEACE BALLOT INDICATES PUBLIC FEELING

However, the temper of British opinion forestalled any acknowledgement of the fact that Britain had no vital interests in Abyssinia and precluded any implementing of the proposal to join Mussolini in the partition of Ethiopia. The strength of opinion on this subject was strikingly revealed to the British Government by the British National Peace Ballot, which started in the spring of 1934 and was sponsored by the League of Nations Union and thirty-eight other organizations.¹²⁶ It was revolutionary in the sense that it was an effort, almost unique in British history, to bring public opinion to bear upon the foreign policy of the Government by direct action through an unofficial vote of the nation.¹²⁷

In the early stages of the ballot, it was announced as an unwarranted and irresponsible interference with the Government's foreign policy.¹²⁸ Not only the middle section of the press, such as *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, but the Beaverbrook and Rothermere press criticized the ballot.¹²⁹ Members of the Government joined Conservative speakers and the pro-Government press in reproaching Lord Cecil, as President of the League Union, for having launched such a ballot.¹³⁰ But the supporters of the poll were determined to discover how far opinion would support the League.¹³¹

The results of the ballot produced an abrupt reversal of mind, on the part of most Conservatives. For example, where previously *The Times* had declared the ballot a "deplorable waste of time and effort," after the results were made known, this same paper pronounced the results of poll as impressive.¹³² And while Sir John Simon and Sir Austen Chamberlain had attacked the ballot in its initial stage,¹³³ later Baldwin, Simon and Hoare received a deputation of representatives conducting the ballot and the

¹²⁵ *News Chronicle*, February 18, 1936; *Daily Herald*, February 19, 1936. See also "A Rash Publication," *The Spectator*, February 21, 1936, p. 286.

¹²⁶ A complete account is found in Dame Adelaide Livingstone, *The Peace Ballot — The Official History* (1935), 78 pp.

¹²⁷ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, May 23, 1934, p. 711.

¹²⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 295, November 21, 1934, col. 155-6; V. 296, December 12, 1934, col. 381-2. See also "A Misconceived Agitation," *The Spectator*, November 26, 1934, p. 741, which noted that the ballot "would set the average citizen . . . thinking on the responsibilities of the country as a member of the League."

¹²⁹ *The Times*, November 28, 1934; *Daily Telegraph*, December 14, 1934.

¹³⁰ Mr. Amery and Sir Bolton-Eyres were very audible in denouncing the ballot. "Common Sense and the Peace Ballot," *The Spectator*, November 26, 1934, p. 778.

¹³¹ See the Earl of Lytton's "The National Declaration Controversy," *The Spectator*, November 16, 1934, p. 747.

¹³² *The Times*, July 27, 1934, June 28, 1935.

¹³³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 293, November 8, 1934, col. 789-91, 603-5.

Prime Minister asserted then that the Government accepted the result of the ballot as a national declaration. Mr. Baldwin added that "... The foreign policy of the Government is founded upon the League of Nations . . . We value this support."¹³⁴

The result of the ballot called one of the greatest victories of public opinion over official temporizing in British history.

WOULD BRITISH OPINION ACTUALLY SUPPORT A WAR?

Cautious observers at the time suggested that a good many of the votes could be discounted on the ground that there was some doubt whether a majority of the British people desired the risk of war in case the League Covenant was endangered and British interests were not directly concerned.¹³⁵ The more skeptical political observers asserted that the ballot demonstrated that the British public was overwhelmingly pacifist. However these same observers distrusted the ballot as an indication of public support for the League policy if it led to war. They agreed that the public supported the League as long as it stood for peace and disarmament, but not for British participation in a League war.¹³⁶

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1935

There was little doubt that the results of the Peace Ballot greatly influenced the type of campaign waged by the National Government in the General Election of November, 1935.¹³⁷

Throughout the campaign, which centered on the League and issues of foreign policy, the government supporters assured the electorate that the Cabinet would continue to support the collective system and seek a settlement acceptable to the League and the two parties involved in Africa. In an address to the International Peace Society in October, 1935, Mr. Baldwin pointed out that a policy of isolation was no longer possible for

. . . The motive of self interest, if nothing else, urges us away from such a policy. A cooperative effort for peace in which we play our part is not quixotism, it is not an idealistic desire to be the policeman of the world, it is common sense, applied to the facts of things as they are.

¹³⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 304, July 30, 1935, col. 2478. A good description appears in H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 302, May 31, 1935, col. 1438.

¹³⁵ Harold Nicolson pointed out that before the Ballot was started, its organizations held a test ballot in Ilford, and the pertinent question there was: "Do you agree with that part of the Locarno Treaty which binds Britain to help France or Germany if attacked by the other?" Although 5,898 votes in Ilford were in favor of standing by Locarno, 18,498 or a two-thirds majority declared that they would do nothing of the sort. Thus the organizers in framing the questions for the Peace Ballot omitted this awkward question and substituted a double question described as "wider and more inclusive." The Peace Ballot was not convincing to those who know of the test ballot. Harold Nicolson, "British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. I, 1937, pp. 53-63.

¹³⁶ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, November 30, 1934, p. 828. See M. Flandin, *Politique Française, 1919-1940*, p. 180-82. *The Observer* also backed this position.

¹³⁷ See William Thomas Morgan, "The British General Election of 1935: A Study of British Public Opinion as Expressed in 10 Daily Newspapers," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, V. 37, April 1938, pp. 108-31. One extreme view asserted that the Second World War was a direct outcome of the "Peace Ballot," since it threw Italy into the arms of Germany and embittered her against England. See S. Huddleston, *Popular Diplomacy and War*, pp. 219-220.

At the same time, he admitted the possibility that the League might eventually be compelled to use force.

... Its creators knew that it was not sufficient to desire peace; it might become necessary to enforce it . . . We mean nothing by the League if we are not prepared, in the end, and after grave and careful trial, to take action to enforce its judgement.¹³⁸

Meanwhile, Lloyd George, in one of the last speeches of the outgoing Parliament, created, by a series of questions, most cleverly an atmosphere of suspicion of the Government's motives in their conciliatory attitude towards Italy and he made tremendous play of the Government's statement that there was a "lull" in foreign affairs.¹³⁹ Mr. Amery in the same way, showed how the League supporters on the Government's side had hedged on their word.¹⁴⁰

But the Government went into the campaign in the midst of an international crisis which in the past had always been favorable to the group in office and the Conservatives presented a foreign policy which broadly had the sympathy of the country and further more, in its large outlines, had the support of the Opposition as well. This had the effect of wiping out the previous impact of Sir Simon's unpopular conduct of foreign affairs while Sir Samuel Hoare's strong speech at Geneva combined with the influence of Mr. Eden on pro-League opinion undoubtedly had considerable weight in the results of the election.¹⁴¹ The Government made wide use of a poster showing a first planted squarely on the Covenant with the caption: "Our Word is Our Bond."¹⁴² And Sir Samuel Hoare declared in a speech at Guildhall early in November that Britain's policy "is simple and clear; it has not changed since my speech at Geneva, nor will it change after the election . . ."¹⁴³

The National Government was returned with a large majority, although their margin was not as large as it had been in the 1931 Election and it appears that British opinion generally believed then that the Government's victory would bring forth a policy of drastic sanctions in the hope of not only weakening Italy, but of bringing the African war to an end.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ For a full text of Baldwin's speech, see *The Times*, November 1, 1935; also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, October 25, 1935, p. 561.

¹³⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 307, December 18, 1935, col. 1803.

¹⁴⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1956-7.

¹⁴¹ Harold J. Laske, "The General Election. 1935," *Political Quarterly*, VI. 1936, pp. 1-15.

¹⁴² "The Elector's Choice," *The Spectator*, November 1, 1935, pp. 708-9.

¹⁴³ *The Times*, November 10, 1935.

¹⁴⁴ "Election Reflections," *The Spectator*, November 22, 1935, p. 843; Vera Micheles Dean, "The Quest for Ethiopian Peace," *Foreign Policy Reports*, VIII, February 26, 1936, pp. 318-22. Mr. Nicolson notes that during the campaign he received a letter which asked: "Can you assure me that you stand for the League and collective security and will oppose any entanglements in Europe?" He read this letter at several meetings and watched for a reaction. Only in several instances did his audience at once see that the letter was self-contradictory. In view of this, Mr. Nicolson added that he was convinced that the Peace Ballot was not a considered expression of national will, but an expression of ill-considered national desires, or in other words, it expressed what the country wanted to happen and it did not express what they were prepared to do. Harold Nicolson, "British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, I, 1937, pp. 53-63.

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE HOARE-LAVAL PROPOSALS

During the election campaign, the Labor Party had charged the Government with planning to make terms with Italy. Sir Samuel Hoare not only emphatically denied these persistent allegations as "wild accusations," but the charges as well that either he or the British Government were conniving with M. Laval in the preparation of a peace settlement which would betray Abyssinia.¹⁴⁵

Thus the impression on the British public created by his resignation was one of general astonishment mingled with relief. While the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* hailed the proposals, *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Herald* and the *Manchester Guardian* took the same line in calling for a repudiation of the proposals. The latter papers represented a large proportion of the reading public of all parties.¹⁴⁶ The Sunday press followed much the same division.¹⁴⁷

The history of Britain affords no precedent to the spectacle of a Government, returned by a majority of more than two to one, abandoning under pressure of opinion within five weeks of its election, a foreign policy approved by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the entire Cabinet.¹⁴⁸

During the previous months, Britain's policy, in company with other members of the League, had been one of "steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression."¹⁴⁹ Yet, in December, this policy appeared to be in ruins inasmuch as the House was demanding an immediate Government statement repudiating the Paris proposals and in France, M. Herriot was forced to withdraw his support from M. Laval.¹⁵⁰

The Opposition attack was led by Mr. Lees-Smith and Sir S. Cripps.¹⁵¹ Sir Arthur Sinclair, while asking the Government why no news was received from Paris for two whole days during the negotiations, stated that

¹⁴⁵ *The Times*, October 25, November 5, 1935. In a speech at Chelsea, October 28, 1935, Sir Samuel Hoare, had stated that he would explore with M. Laval for a settlement which would satisfy Italy, Abyssinia and the League, to which it was noted that that would be difficult if not impossible. "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, November 1, 1935, pp. 705-6.

¹⁴⁶ *The Times* appeared to be riding the crest of opinion when it reprinted countless letters from its readers condemning the proposals. after they were made public. See speech by Mr. Attlee, H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 307, December 19, 1935, col. 2019. "Shall Aggression Pay," *The Spectator*, December 13, 1935, p. 974.

¹⁴⁷ An interesting article on the greater influence of the Sunday press on opinion was written by Kingsley Martin, "Public Opinion: The Sunday Newspapers," *Political Quarterly*, V. 6, 1935, pp. 111-5.

¹⁴⁸ H of C., *op. cit.*, col. 2069. See also "The Triumph of Public Opinion," *The Economist*, December 21, 1935, pp. 205-8; Sylvia Saunders, "This Italy," *The New Statesman and Nation*, December 21, 1935, p. 969. An excellent account of British policy appears in an article by John C. deWilde, "Testing League Sanctions," *Foreign Policy Reports*, XI, December 4, 1935, pp. 238-48 and also Flandin, *Politique Française*, p. 187.

¹⁴⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, December 11, 1935, V. 307, col. 880-3. For an excellent account of the history of the Anglo-Italian diplomacy preceding the Hoare proposals, see speech by Mr. Attlee, H of C., *Ibid.*, December 19, 1935, col. 2021-24.

¹⁵⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 307, December 19, 1935, col. 1006, 2064. Mr. Nicolson asserted that British Opinion was prepared to go to war to uphold the Covenant. Harold Nicolson, "British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. I, 1937, pp. 53-63.

¹⁵¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1806-7, 2064-8.

... Settle with Italy on any terms that the Emperor can be induced to accept and the League cajoled into approving—that is peace at any price . . . We all want peace between Italy and Abyssinia, but not on a basis against which the conscience of the world revolts.¹⁵²

Mr. Dalton hammered away at the impossibility of the entire Cabinet being unaware of the proposals before they appeared in the Paris press.¹⁵³

Interestingly enough, Neville Chamberlain, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave a good indication of how he was to conduct Britain's foreign policy years later when he stated that although he recognised the mistake of the Hoare proposals, he could not say that in similar circumstances, he would not again commit that mistake when he agreed to them as a Cabinet member.¹⁵⁴

Not since the General Strike had there been such a political issue in Parliament. Many Government supporters were close to voting with the Opposition for they realized from their correspondence, which was not "factory-made," that the opinions expressed in those letters generally came from people who usually did not write and from other than supporters of the League of Nations Union.

The term "simply incredible" was the prevalent comment at the first news of the Paris proposals and this rapidly changed to "worse and worse" by mid-December when the White Paper, with its disclosure of British pressure on the Abyssinians, was published. Members of all parties, in following opinion in the country, agreed that the Paris terms as underwritten by the British Cabinet, were utterly incompatible with the Covenant of the League.¹⁵⁵

One publication expressed no small part of opinion by noting that the indignation aroused by the Hoare-Laval plan appeared to have been more of a protest against the gross injustice of a few great powers cynically dividing up a small and helpless country than the conclusion of a chain of reasoning establishing the validity of the idea of collective security.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2048.

¹⁵³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2101-2. In view of what Sir S. Hoare had told the House on December 5th that "it may be that we are engaged upon a hopeless task . . . None the less, the French and we intend not only to go on trying . . . We and the French, acting on behalf of the League, and in the spirit of the League, are determined to make another great effort for peace," H of C., *Ibid.*, December 5, 1935, col. 345, Mr. Dalton's criticism seemed justified in view of Lord Halifax's statement that Hoare had gone to Paris without instructions. See H of L, *Ibid.*, V. 99, December 19, 1935, col. 278.

¹⁵⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, December 19, 1935, col. 2111. The *Mail* editorialized with "the screaming sanctionists have brought Hoare down, but in the words of (Neville) Chamberlain, his speech of December 19th was not the least of the services he has rendered to his country . . . It is welcome news that the perilous cil sanctions have been indefinitely postponed." *Daily Mail*, December 20, 1935.

¹⁵⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 307, December 9, 1935, col. 565-6 and December 19, 1935, col. 2067.

¹⁵⁶ "A Puzzled People," *The Economist*, April 11, 1936, pp. 489-91.

THE GOVERNMENT BOWS TO OPINION

The answer to the Government's blunder and the state of opinion was given to the House on December 19, 1935. Sir Samuel Hoare, who had allegedly gone to Paris without instructions, had been so impressed with the urgent need of conciliation and the danger of the situation drifting into a general war, had allowed himself to be drawn into drafting terms which were the minimum that M. Laval would agree to put forward, according to the Government.¹⁵⁷ The best defense that Sir Samuel Hoare was able to make for them was that the proposals fell far short of Mussolini's previous demands.¹⁵⁸

Then there was Mr. Baldwin's astounding admission that the British Cabinet was not in touch with the Paris proceedings and "were not aware, until they heard that it was accomplished, that an agreement had been reached at Paris."¹⁵⁹ And he further asserted that though the Government disliked the terms, the leakage in Paris forced them to act quickly and that rather than let Hoare down, they agreed to the proposals and had consequently admitted that this had been a mistake.¹⁶⁰

In answer to the demand by public opinion, the Government was forced to assert that "the proposals are absolutely and completely dead, and the Government will make no attempt to resurrect them."¹⁶¹

But what Britain's future policy was to be, Mr. Baldwin did not disclose at the time. He did state that Britain would continue to base her policy on the League and that "we are prepared, collectively, to fulfill our part in every way."¹⁶²

There, for the moment, the matter stood, for the leader of the Opposition, by giving the debate a personnel and party turn, made sure that Mr. Baldwin was automatically secure in his majority. Sir Austen Chamberlain summed the matter up with

When the Leader of the Opposition pointed to our Prime Minister and said: "It is your honor that is at stake," he made it certain that no supporter of the Government would abstain from the vote. That is the

¹⁵⁷ See speech by Sir S. Hoare, H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 307, December 19, 1935, col. 2004-5. See also "Retreat from Blunder," *The Spectator*, December 20, 1935, p. 1018. One close observer pointed out that these events had shown the younger Members that Parliament was not a mere balance of party machine, but was in fact a director and a representative of public opinion and that through the corridors and lobbies of the House, in a way outsiders had difficulty understanding, public opinion could directly, immediately and swiftly make itself felt in such a way that the Government becomes aware of what is really being thought throughout the country. Harold Nicolson, H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2076-7.

¹⁵⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2007-17.

¹⁵⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2031. For a criticism of this explanation, see H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2043; H of L., *Ibid.*, V. 99, December 19, 1935, col. 346.

¹⁶⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2029. Mr. Attlee indicated how the Government had followed opinion on this issue when it waited until after the House debate on the evening of December 10th before sending telegrams to Rome and Addis Ababa. H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2027-8.

¹⁶¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2035.

¹⁶² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 307, December 19, 1935, col. 2037.

Challenge. Whatever opinion we may hold about what is past, whatever differences of opinion there may be among us as to what ought to be done now, that is a challenge which every member of the National Party will resist and resent.¹⁶³

For these reasons and in spite of the blunder at Paris, the Government received a vote of confidence of 390 to 165.¹⁶⁴

THE ROLE OF OPINION IN THE DECISION

These events, however, suggest certain reflections. Hitherto, in many influential circles, the idea of the League and of collective security had received only half-hearted support and the implications had never been fully realised. To the British party politicians, support for the League appeared merely a convenient instrument to rally the great "peace vote" at the elections. Those who regarded the League and the principle of collective security from either of these standpoints ignored the fact that in the opinion of the overwhelming mass of the people, the League was the hope of the world and of its civilization. It was definitely shown at this time that it was impossible for any Government, however great its majority, to play fast and loose with the convictions and aspirations so deeply rooted in the hearts of the people.

In the second place, it was made clear that in Great Britain public opinion was not merely a useful barometer for politicians, but it was an all-powerful political force.

Finally, these events were a tribute to the efficiency of a free press faithfully interpreting public opinion.¹⁶⁵ With the exception of the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and the *Observer*, none of the leading daily papers in Britain were found to have supported the notorious "peace plan," or indeed, wholeheartedly, the Government in any particular of this incident.¹⁶⁶

OPINION AND SANCTIONS

The next stage found the League in no less of a quandary. Sanctions were applied, but, at the same time, Britain and France insisted on con-

¹⁶³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2040. However Sir Charles Petrie's *Life and Letters of Sir Austen Chamberlain* brings out the fact that Sir Austen was among the first of British statesmen to understand the threat posed by the Axis Powers.

¹⁶⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2120. *The Times* stated that "if it had been possible for a Division to be taken without the intervention of the Parliamentary Whips, there is little doubt that a Motion of Censure would be carried in the present mood of the House." *The Times*, December 18, 1935. See also "Casting Europe's Horoscope." *The Economist*, January 4, 1936, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁵ Henry N. Brailsford contended that the press was under Foreign Office control in reporting this incident up to the Hoare proposals. N. N. Brailsford, "The British Press and British Policy," *New Republic*, 85:221, January 1, 1936. See Paul Vaucher and Paul-Henri Sériex, *L'Opinion britannique le Societe des Nations, et la guerre italo-ethiopienne*, 1936, 98 pp.

¹⁶⁶ In February, 1936, the *Express* conducted a poll on the African war and found that "83 in 100 adults in Britain sided with Ethiopia and 11 out of 100 sided with Italy." *Daily Express*, February 6, 8, 1936. *The Spectator* commented that while this poll was limited as polls go—only 5000 votes cast—it was probably about right in gauging opinion at that time. "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, February 14, 1936, p. 246.

tinuing mediatory efforts directed toward a friendly settlement. It was difficult for many to see how enough collective force could be applied with sufficient effect to defeat Mussolini when the two leading powers in the League were making "great professions of friendship for the country which (they were) attempting to coerce."¹⁶⁷

Many in England believed that economic and financial sanctions would suffice to defeat an aggressor. Since Italy was particularly vulnerable to economic pressure, the stage was set for an ideal test of the new peace machinery. As events were to indicate, the League failed because, contrary to the elaborate sanctionist theories, it was impossible in practice for the League powers to apply effective economic sanctions without running the risk of being forced to take military action as well. Opinion within the Powers involved was not willing to take this risk as indicated in Britain, for example, by the Peace Ballot of 1935.¹⁶⁸

The British Government, under pressure from opinion, had submitted to the necessity of applying sanctions, but "never even proposed . . . the consideration of any military measures."¹⁶⁹ In fact, Britain had ruled this out from the beginning by agreement with France. As previously indicated and in the course of later events, this position was somewhat modified under growing collectivist pressure.

Thus in the first few months following the Hoare proposals of December, 1935, there was an ever growing public demand for sanctions against Italy with the question of an oil sanction the greatest issue.¹⁷⁰ By February 12, 1936, Mr. Dalton demanded in the House that an end be made to the scandalous conditions of affairs under which the Italian war machine was being fed with British oil.¹⁷¹

As in the past, the press was divided on the issue with the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* opposing any sanctions whatsoever, *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* backing the Government's policy of conciliation and non-effective sanctions, while the *Manchester Guardian* and *Daily Herald* demanded full and complete sanctions. *The Economist* was in line with the latter papers when it urged immediate sanctions.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ "The Sanctions Committee," *The Economist*, January 25, 1936, pp. 170-1.

¹⁶⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 307, December 19, 1935, col. 2004-5; V. 308, February 4, 1936, col. 53-4.

¹⁶⁹ In the House, Under-Secretary Cranborne noted that with the exception of Mr. Amery, who had called for no sanctions and conciliation with Italy and Sir A. Wilson, who claimed that Article 16 had died in 1925, differences of opinion in the House were rather over the carrying out of the main policy and not over the policy itself. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 309, February 24, 1936, col. 158 and 103. *The Times* had used the phrase "to the Attaining of Peace by Force of Sanctions." *The Times*, December 20, 1935.

¹⁷⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 309, February 24, 1936, col. 121-21.

¹⁷¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 308, February 12, 1936, col. 919-21. See also "Oil, the League's Duty," *The Economist*, February 15, 1936, pp. 345-6.

¹⁷² "Europe and the War," *The Economist*, February 29, 1936, pp. 453-4; *Daily Mail*, February 26, 1936; *Daily Express*, February 27, 1936; *The Times*, February 23, 1936; *Daily Telegraph*, February 14 and 22, 1936; *Daily Herald*, February 26, 1936; *Manchester Guardian*, February 25, 1936.

That opinion in the House was strong for oil sanctions was apparent, as for example, when Mr. Eden commented late in February that

There has come to be attached to oil sanctions in certain quarters something of a symbolic quality . . . To my mind oil is a sanction like any other and must be judged by the same criterion, whether its imposition will help stop the war . . .¹⁷³

Member after Member in the House noted that unless Italy was stopped by League action, it would only encourage aggression by Hitler. There was, then, general disappointment with Mr. Eden's speech in both the House and in the country.¹⁷⁴

There was sharp criticism in this regard for while pro-League opinion had been contented by the appointment of Mr. Eden as Foreign Secretary, his answers on the sanctions issue during January and February, 1936, were ominously similar to those of his two immediate predecessors in the Foreign Office.¹⁷⁵

The Government took the view that it would be ready to go to any length, provided it was. "satisfied that all members of the League . . . are not only ready to give us assurances but are prepared to take their part in meeting an attack."¹⁷⁶ Since no other country pressed for additional sanctions or took to adhere to a program of additional sanctions, Britain was able to follow her original intention of avoiding any risk of war.¹⁷⁷

Under these conditions the question was not what economic measures were necessary to defeat Italy, but which economic sanctions could be applied without involving the League powers in a possible war. Thus, the sanctions period, characterized by the use of a limited set of economic sanctions, also ended in failure.

However the Opposition in the House continued to demand more effective sanctions. During April and May, 1936, this issue claimed the most attention. For example, in the House, first Mr. Churchill on April 6 and Mr. Dalton on May 6, drove home one by one accusations against the dilatoriness and timidity of the Government on the sanctions issue.¹⁷⁸ Only the unique ability of Mr. Eden in effectively answering these charges weakened the Opposition's case in the eyes of opinion.¹⁷⁹

Meanwhile, the press was carrying on the issue by reprinting letters from the readers. For example, Lord Cecil wrote in *The Times* that "the

¹⁷³ H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 309, February 24, 1936, col. 52-4.

¹⁷⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 70, 131, 149-50. *Daily Herald*, February 25, 1936; *Manchester Guardian*, February 25, 1936.

¹⁷⁵ "End This War," *The Economist*, February 22, 1936, pp. 396-9. See also *Daily Herald*, January 11, 24, 26, 1936.

¹⁷⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 309, February 24, 1936, col. 154-8.

¹⁷⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 158; see also "A Puzzled People," *The Economist*, April 11 1936, pp. 489-91.

¹⁷⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 311, May 6, 1936, col. 1851; V. 310, April 6, 1936, col. 2479-2565.

¹⁷⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 311, May 6, 1936, col. 1923-8.

Italian Government had killed and is about to take possession. Friendliness to Italy would seem to British opinion morally intolerable and what is morally intolerable is not politically expedient," while Norman Angell wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* that "Mussolini tells us that he has gone into Abyssinia because the Italian people need colonies . . . But there are very much better colonies lying about . . . Why not one of these? Because he was quite sure that if he began to land troops in say, South Africa or Malta, sanctions would be applied immediately and to the full.¹⁸⁰

During May, the sanctions issue continued to effect opinion. However, Mr. Baldwin began to gain strength as a result of Sir Austen Chamberlain's strange volte-face on the sanctions issue and Mr. Churchill's vicious attack on the Prime Minister, both of which resulted in causing many of the Government's supporters who until then had been on the fence, to decide that they would rather have Mr. Baldwin than anyone else.¹⁸¹

During the same period, a strong parallel movement took place in Britain toward support for the League. Parliamentary Members home on the British weekends during May reported that any suggestion in their districts that the League fight be called off met with strenuous opposition. There was indeed a very strong feeling, far outside the League of Nations Union, that the Government should consider blocking the Suez Canal to Italy.¹⁸² By late May, it appeared that most of the popular press favored dropping Mr. Baldwin from the Government not only because he had misinformed the House in regard to the Sir Samuel Hoare proposals at Paris, but for his more grave errors in reporting the extent and rapidity of German rearmament. However, Mr. Baldwin was able to muster his followers behind him and he remained the leader of the Government and his party.¹⁸³

In another quarter, there continued to be a strong group in Britain who had many reasons for not wanting Britain to incur the risks of war, especially with Italy. These people had always maintained that the British people should and would fight only for the vital interests of Britain. Cries of "not one battleship" and "not one British soldier" were heard frequently from the Conservative side of the House.¹⁸⁴ In particular, there were those who believed that Italy should have been retained as a friend at all costs

¹⁸⁰ "Correspondence," *The Times*, May 11, 1936; "Letters," *Daily Telegraph*, May 11, 1936. It was noted then that sufficient tribute had never been paid to "Letters" as a national institution. It was accurately noted that this correspondence was in fact an essential characteristic of the British press in particular, and that no other country's correspondence had attained at that time the same weight or scale as Britain's and it was further observed that what gave the letters their value was the fact that they came from men and women who had something to say which frequently was better said than the leading article of the paper that it appeared in. "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, May 15, 1936, p. 870.

¹⁸¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 311, May 6, 1936, col. 1772-3. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, May 15, 1936, p. 867.

¹⁸² H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1732-42. See also the *Manchester Guardian*, May 12, 1936; *Daily Herald*, May 4, 1936; "Waiting on the Aggressor," *The Economist*, March 7, 1936, pp. 512-3; "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, May 15, 1936, p. 867.

¹⁸³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 312, May 29, 1936, col. 2453-5. See also "The Case for Mr. Baldwin," by the Parliamentary Correspondent, *The Spectator*, May 22, 1936, pp. 926-7.

¹⁸⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2489, 2468. See also the *Daily Mail*, June 24, 1936.

and further that friendship with France was to be best preserved by not forcing the imposition of unwanted sanctions.¹⁸⁵

This was in the period when Mr. Churchill was urging peace with Italy even if it turned out bad for Ethiopia and was repugnant to British opinion. In his opinion, the war there was a lost cause and in view of the greater German menace on the Rhine, Britain could do better by a settlement of the African war.¹⁸⁶

By the summer of 1936, British opinion was sharply divided on the question of dropping sanctions against Italy. The whole matter was set off by Neville Chamberlain on June 10th when he told the House that the continuance of sanctions was the "very midsummer of madness,"¹⁸⁷ and his speech along the same lines to the 1900 Club on June 12th.¹⁸⁸ His remarks were probably a fair reflection of Conservative opinion. And while his statements were regarded as a serious constitutional impropriety, he did not in fact state anything with which Mr. Eden would have disagreed with. Neville Chamberlain was simply making a premature and unauthorized announcement by inference of decisions that had already been reached. On June 18th, Mr. Eden officially announced the Government's intention to end sanctions against Italy.¹⁸⁹ It appeared that several younger members of the Cabinet were most reluctant to accept the withdrawal of sanctions, but they were handicapped in their opposition by the fact that it was extremely difficult to argue that any useful purpose would be served by the continuance of those measures. Their difficulty was shared by many of the back-benchers on the Government side of the House who had favored sanctions.¹⁹⁰

When the staunchest League supporters put the question to themselves of what could be achieved by maintaining the sanctions front, they were unable to find a satisfactory answer. The Labor and Liberal Opposition were not able then to make much party capital out of Britain's position on sanctions, and though the electorate was concerned with the situation, the feeling was nothing like the fierce and widespread protest of the previous December at the Hoare-Laval Plan.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 311, May 6, 1936, col. 1772-4. However there were those who felt that opinion should not discriminate against Germany if Italy was to have a free hand. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 312, May 29, 1936, col. 2481-2.

¹⁸⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 313, June 11, 1936, col. 402. See also W. Churchill, "Where Do We Stand," *Step by Step*, pp. 21-4.

¹⁸⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 313, June 10, 1936, col. 162.

¹⁸⁸ *The Times*, June 13, 1936.

¹⁸⁹ H of C., *op. cit.*, June 18, 1936, col. 1243-47. See also "Eden to Lead Retreat," *The Daily Herald*, June 18, 1936. On June 7th, Lord Cecil had appealed to all League of Nations Union followers that they were obligated to maintain the independence of Abyssinia and he urged all to contact their representative in Parliament and to insist on a good speech. *The Times* strongly condemned this appeal. *The Times*, June 8, 1936. M. Flandin indicates that this action came as a surprise to the French. Flandin, *Politique Française*, p. 192.

¹⁹⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, June 15, 1936, col. 618-21; June 18, 1936, col. 1211-21. See also an excellent study on why the League action failed in regard to sanctions by M. F. Bonn, "How Sanctions Failed," *Foreign Affairs*, January, 1937.

¹⁹¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 313, June 23, 1936, col. 1718-30. See also "The New John Bull," by Norman Angell, *Political Quarterly*, V. 7, 1936, pp. 311-29.

In the debate on the motion of censure on the sanctions issue on June 22nd and 23rd, 1936, the Government again emerged victorious.¹⁹² However, it was noted that the Government had opinion well in mind when Mr. Baldwin, in referring to Neville Chamberlain's June 12th remarks as unwarranted indiscretions,¹⁹³ added that,

. . . So the second object of our policy is the appeasement of the situation of the area of Europe. We are most anxious to get on to those negotiations. There is no foundation for the charges that we are going to leave Europe to look after herself.¹⁹⁴

The Labor Party was confined to criticizing the Government's past policy as the direct cause of the tense situation during the summer of 1936. The extent of the split in opinion over this issue was indicated on July 3rd when Sir Austen Chamberlain resigned from the League of Nations Union over the question of continuing sanctions.¹⁹⁵

The press was roughly divided on the issue as it had been throughout the period of the war in Africa. On one side, the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* hailed the announcement and argued that this action had been taken far too late. *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* hailed the Government's action and urged quick conciliation with Italy while the *Daily Herald* and the *Manchester Guardian* deplored the removal of sanctions.¹⁹⁶

Thus the month of July, 1936, witnessed the death of collective security as conceived in the spirit of the League of Nations. This was hailed by the Rothermere press as a victory for the British people and Lord Rothermere went on to describe his conception of Britain's foreign policy as

The puzzle of British foreign policy is gradually being solved. Experience proves it to be the rule of the present Government that bold words should always and automatically be followed by preceptitate retreat.¹⁹⁷

Ethiopia suffered a cruel defeat and the League received a set-back from which it was never able to fully recover from and which in turn was a hard blow to those who had pinned their hopes on the League.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² H of C., *Ibid.*, June 22, 1936, col. 1622. However the results of the by-election at Derby in which Mr. Noel-Baker converted a government majority of 12,000 into an opposition majority of 3,000 indicated strong dissatisfaction with the Government's policy. Mr. Noel-Baker's election on a strong League policy and intensification of sanctions was symptomatic of widespread discontent and mistrust by opinion of the Government. "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, July 17, 1936, p. 91. The censure motion was defeated 384-170. H of C., *Ibid.*, June 23, 1936, col. 1730-4.

¹⁹³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1727-8.

¹⁹⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1731

¹⁹⁵ *The Times*, July 5, 1936.

¹⁹⁶ *Daily Mail*, June 24, 1936; *Daily Express*, June 23, 1936; *The Times*, June 24 and 25, 1936; *Daily Telegraph*, June 26, 1936; *Daily Herald*, June 24, 1936; *Manchester Guardian*, June 25, 1936.

¹⁹⁷ *Daily Mail*, June 19, 1936.

¹⁹⁸ The entire point is discussed by Leonard Woolf, "Mediation on Abyssinia," *The Political Quarterly*, V. 7, 1936 and Mackintosh, *The Paths that Led to War*, ch 27. See also Jean Bastin, *L'Afrique D'Ethiopie et les Diplomates* (Paris, 1937).

The psychological effect on opinion was that British opinion no longer felt that the League could keep and maintain peace nor could disputes be settled or avoided through the use of collective security. Thus it appears that while opinion was regretful at the failure of sanctions and the resulting weakening of the League, British opinion was not yet willing to turn out the present Government and put in a new group of leaders who might risk war.

It is impossible to determine what influence other nations had on the attitude of the British Government and opinion, but whatever the influence, it was there. For example, as late as August, 1936, President Roosevelt was quoted as saying ". . . we shun political commitments which might entangle us in foreign wars; we avoid connection with the political activities of the League of Nations . . . We are not isolationist except in so far as we seek to isolate ourselves completely from war."¹⁹⁹

Thus as this phase of appeasement and the policy in pursuit of appeasement closed, British opinion definitely appeared to support the reigning party in the country and the foreign policy carried out by that party.

¹⁹⁹ Much pertinent material on this subject from an American point of view is found in Charles A. Beard, *American Foreign Policy in the Making*, pp. 13, 134 ff, 165, 171-74.

CHAPTER III

THE LAST OF VERSAILLES

THE COLONIAL QUESTION

During 1935, 1936, and 1937, British opinion was very divided over the appeasement of Germany and Italy in regard to the possible return of colonies to those two countries. Throughout this period, there was a considerable part of opinion that believed and demanded that the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles should have been corrected mainly by the return of the former German and Italian colonies to their rightful owners. This group of people based their opinion on the fact that both Germany and Italy had large populations which needed an outlet and that both countries required raw materials so that they could balance their economies. This group further believed that if a solution to this problem could be found, the danger of war would be considerably reduced if not eliminated.²⁰⁰

However, with the passing of each year after 1935, the number of people in Britain who believed that certain colonies should be returned to Germany and Italy decreased rapidly, partly as a result of the conduct of the Axis Powers. By the early part of 1936, a definite majority opposed that particular form of appeasement. For example, early in 1936, Lloyd George spoke significantly on a motion by Mr. Lansbury regarding the summoning of a world conference for the purpose of working out a colonial solution. His statement probably represented widespread feeling on the subject.

... Under the Treaty of Versailles these territories (Mandated) were not given to us as British possessions; they were given to the League of Nations. They are in a totally different position from the other possessions of the British Empire . . . I do not believe that you will have peace in the world until you reconsider the mandates . . . I do not believe, and I am bound to say it here, that you can make peace in the world unless you . . . say that the British Empire is prepared to reconsider the question of mandates.²⁰¹

However popular that statement might have been with British opinion, it definitely represented only a minority who would actively support such a solution. There was clearly no strong disposition in any party to look

²⁰⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 302, May 31, 1935, col. 1440-2.

²⁰¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 308, February 5, 1936, col. 236; 209-84. An excellent account from the German point of view may be found in Johannsen, *Germany's Colonial Problem* (1936).

with favor upon the proposal that Britain should summon an international conference for the purpose of placing mandated territories into a world pool which, it was believed, would greatly relieve world tensions.²⁰² Generally, the lower House seemed to believe that it was not the moment to show any indication of weakness towards the aggressor nations insofar as the outright return of former colonies to the Axis Powers was concerned.

The fact was clear that opinion was thinking over the issue. This was indicated by the frequency of questions asked in the House of Commons. The Government continued to answer these questions with the firm reply that Britain had not and was not considering the return of any colony to Germany or Italy.²⁰³

Meanwhile, part of the press noted that Germany's and Italy's claims were too insistent to be passed off completely. *The Times*, for example, used its correspondence-from-readers columns to carry on the issue. It printed numerous letters, one from Lord Lothian which bluntly stated that a League which could do nothing about the return of the colonies would only plunge the world into a war.²⁰⁴ A few days later, the same paper carried a series of articles by a Miss Perham entitled "Our Task in Africa," which coined a constructive phrase for the friends of colonial appeasement - "the internationalism of Imperialism."²⁰⁵

However, the results of a poll by the *Express* provided substantial evidence of the rank and file feeling on the subject and indicated that only twenty percent favored the return of the colonies to Germany.²⁰⁶

At the time of the Rhineland crisis, the question again appeared on the political horizon. There was still a minority that firmly believed that by the return of some colonies to Germany, Hitler could be induced to behave and rejoin the League.²⁰⁷ Sir Arthur Sinclair made a plea in March for a conference to attempt to remove all grievances hanging over Europe.²⁰⁸ In the months that followed the Rhineland crisis, the Government was questioned frequently in the House regarding Britain's policy on the former Axis colonies.

In April, both Mr. Eden and Neville Chamberlain told the House that the British Government's attitude was that the colonies had to be distinguished from mandated territories and that there had never been a question of the transfer of any colonies. Further, the Government took special pains to explain that in any proposed transfer, the wishes of the natives involved would be taken into consideration.²⁰⁹

²⁰² "Notes," *The Economist*, February 8, 1936, p. 296. See also Flandin, *Politique Française*, 1919-1940, p. 193.

²⁰³ H of C., *op. cit.*, February 12, 1936, col. 879.

²⁰⁴ *The Times*, February 9, 1936. See also the *Daily Telegraph*, February 11 and 13, 1936; "Panic or Policy," *The Economist*, February 22, 1936, pp. 295-6.

²⁰⁵ Miss Perham, "Our Task in Africa," *The Times*, February 15, 16, 17, 1936.

²⁰⁶ *Daily Express*, February 19, 1936.

²⁰⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 309, March 9, 1936, col. 1810.

²⁰⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1864-5.

²⁰⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, April 1, 1936, col. 1970; April 6, 1936, col. 2316.

In spite of this policy statement, apprehension continued to mount in Parliament over the colonial question and what the Government's actual attitude was or would be on the issue. In May after Sir John Simon had inadvertently mentioned that the Government was seeking an overall solution which included colonies, Neville Chamberlain, in seeking to calm aroused opinion and to maintain his control over the House, explained that

. . . The mandates were allotted by the Powers at Versailles. Territories mandated were placed under the guardianship of the League. It has never been held or pretended that it was within the power of the League to transfer a mandate from one country to another.²¹⁰

By the middle of 1936, opinion in Britain appeared to be fairly represented by the content of a resolution passed by the Conservative Party Conference which held that the restoration of any colony to Germany was not discussable.²¹¹ It should be noted that at least one member of Parliament observed that the Government never went on record as opposing the return of colonies.²¹²

But the fact that British opinion was willing to consider anything short of the outright return of the colonies if it would have insured peace was indicated by the favorable reception by the press of Mr. Eden's offer in September, 1937, before the League Assembly to the effect that Britain was willing

. . . to enter into discussions with any Power which may approach the British Government for an abatement of particular preferences in non-self governing territories where these can be shown to place undue restriction on international trade.²¹³

Earlier there had been a mixed reaction by opinion to Ribbentrop's Leipzig speech, who while still German Ambassador to Britain, threatened war unless German colonies were returned freely. There were some in the House and in the country who demanded formal action protesting Ribbentrop's speech, but the Government took the position that such action would serve no useful purpose and desired to let things go as they were.²¹⁴

In the latter half of 1937, opinion appeared to favor Lord Aster's remarks on the subject that although no door on colonial discussions should be barred and bolted, concession to Germany's demands one by one was a fatal policy. Opinion appeared to favor a demonstration of international

²¹⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 311, May 2, 1936, col. 1207.

²¹¹ *The Times*, July 16, 1936.

²¹² H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 326, July 19, 1937, col. 1840. The proposed visit of the German Foreign Minister late in June was for the purpose of exchanging views on the colonial questions, as agreed to by Mr. Eden. *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, V. III, No. 293 and 334.

²¹³ *The Times*, September 17, 1937. See also Mr. Eden's earlier statement in the House. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 315, July 27, 1936, col. 1132. See also "Mr. Eden's Offer," *The Economist*, September 25, 1937, pp. 875-6.

²¹⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 321, March 8, 1937, col. 779-81. See also Mr. Eden's statement in H of C., *Ibid.*, March 2, 1937, col. 211. Also "The Duce's Pessimism," *The Economist*, March 6, 1937, pp. 510-1.

cooperation on the part of Germany and Italy before any discussion on the return of colonies could take place between the nations involved.²¹⁵ By November, 1937, a public opinion poll on the issue indicated that only twenty-four percent of opinion favored the outright return of any colonies to Germany.²¹⁶

THE LOCARNO CRISIS

Meanwhile, during 1935 and 1936, opinion in Britain showed an increasing awareness of the possibility of a German reoccupation of the Rhineland.²¹⁷ British opinion was interested in knowing what the Government's policy would be in such an eventuality. Thus, as early as May, 1935, Sir John Simon, in answer to questions in the lower House, stated that

The circumstances in which the British guarantee under the Treaty of Locarno would operate are specified in that Treaty itself, as stated in the Anglo-Italian Declaration embodied in the Resolution of the Stresa Conference, this Government stands by all its obligations under the Treaty of Locarno, and intends, should the need arise, to faithfully fulfil them.²¹⁸

Early in the following year when Mr. Eden was asked in the House for an assurance that Britain would immediately aid France in the case of a flagrant breach of the Treaty of Versailles in regard to the Rhineland, Mr. Eden assured the House that Britain intended to stand faithfully by its obligations under the Treaty of Locarno.²¹⁹

Some people in Britain saw the possible consequences of a German reoccupation of the Rhineland and attempted to warn opinion of the danger. Sir Austen Chamberlain bitterly attacked the Prime Minister with the object of warning the Government that the British Parliament and opinion would not tolerate any further blundering in British foreign policy.²²⁰ But the Government continued to maintain its original position that all

²¹⁵ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, October 22, 1937, p. 671. Late in the year, Mr. Eden told the House what he thought of Italy's backing Germany's colonial claims. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 329, November 1, 1937, col. 67-8. See also "Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, November 5, 1937, p. 787; "An Anglo-French Policy," *The Spectator*, December 3, 1937. It was noted that the Government's stand on this issue aided its position with opinion. "Trade and Politics," *The Economist*, October 23, 1937, pp. 150-1. It is of interest to note that Ribbentrop, while Ambassador, observed that the British Foreign Office desired discussions in diplomatic channels and to inform the public as little as possible. *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1954*, V. I, No. 47.

²¹⁶ In October, 1938, only fifteen percent favored this. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82. Lord Halifax told Ribbentrop in December, 1937, that opinion demanded something in return. *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, V. I., No. 75.

²¹⁷ H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 301, May 5, 1935, col. 793.

²¹⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 301, May 7, 1935, col. 808.

²¹⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 308, February 12, 1936, col. 452. The provisions of Locarno are found in Cmd 2525. Vera Micheles Dean in "Origins of the Locarno Crisis," *Foreign Policy Reports*, V. 12, 1936, pp. 78-92, gives a detailed account of the diplomatic events leading up to the German reoccupation of the Rhineland.

²²⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, February 16, 1936, col. 879. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, February 21, 1936, p. 287.

obligations would be honored. A few days after Sir Austen's attack. Mr. Eden told the House that the same problems faced the country then as in the years before 1914 and he appealed to that opinion that believed in collective security by asserting that Britain assumed her full share in the system of collective security.²²¹

On February 27, 1936, the Franco-Soviet Pact, signed the previous May, was finally ratified by France.²²² At the same time, when Italy had threatened to drop the Locarno Agreement because of the threatened oil sanctions, France turned to Britain for additional guarantees in the event of a German move westward to the Rhine.²²³ British opinion appeared to agree with the French that the weakening of the Locarno Pact by Italy's deflection definitely reopened the Rhineland question. A small group in Britain openly favored direct conversations with Germany and a voluntary renunciation of the zone, in lieu of waiting for a German seizure of the area.²²⁴ Mr. Eden did actually attempt to reopen discussions with Germany on the subject.²²⁵

Hitler's reply to the Franco-Soviet Pact was the summoning of the Reichstag on March 7th and the resulting denunciation of the Locarno Agreement on the ground that the new pact was directed against Germany. He then announced the reintroduction of conscription and the reoccupation of the demilitarized areas of the Rhineland by German troops. At the same time, he proposed, a twenty-five years' non-aggression pact with France and Belgium, with Britain and Italy to guarantee the new pact.²²⁶

It was probably the latter part of his speech that accounted for the fact that opinion in Britain allowed this latest act of German defiance to

²²¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 309, February 23, 1936, col. 83, 85. Mr. Eden denied that Britain was attempting to encircle Germany. It is interesting to note that on March 3rd—four days before Hitler moved—the British Government, which after all was supported by a majority, issued a White Paper on Defense in which there was clear evidence, when compared to the Paper of the previous year, that Britain was on this occasion most anxious to say nothing that would give any cause of offense to Germany. Some opinion considered this wise in view of Hitler's recent olive branch, but all of this weakened the case for expansion of Britain's armed forces. The dangers of the dictatorships and their expansionist policies were omitted from the paper. *Cmd 5107*. It created less sensation than was expected and the fact that the Rothermere school of opinion attacked the paper for its complete inadequacy and by Labor for its failure to make its case suggests that a fairly reasonable middle course was chosen by the Government. "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, March 6, 1936, p. 383.

²²² H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 310, March 20, 1936, col. 845.

²²³ *The Times*, March 5 and 6, 1936.

²²⁴ *The Times*, March 6, 1936.

²²⁵ Mr. Eden to Sir Eric Philipps, March 6, 1936, *Cmd 5143*, p. 72. See also Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, p. 223.

²²⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 309, March 9, 1936, col. 1809-10. For the full speech, see *Nazi-Conspiracy and Aggression*, IV, 2289-PS, p. 994, and *Survey of International Affairs*, V. I, 1936. Official correspondence is found in *Cmd 5118*. That Hitler offered the pact to placate British opinion is indicated by the following articles: "Behind the Crisis: Why the Fuehrer Acted," *The Times*, March 10, 1936; "Herr Hitler's Motives," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 15, 1936; "Does Germany Mean Peace," *The Spectator*, March 14, 1936, pp. 500-1. M. Flandin noted that on this occasion Hitler, as usual, moved on a Saturday, in order to gain time on the weekend and before the British Parliament could reassemble to take action. Flandin, *Politique Française, 1919-1940*, p. 201.

pass unchallenged except for verbal protests. The British and French Governments duly expressed their disapproval.²²⁷

This was in spite of the fact that the German action touched France in a most tender spot. France, however, refrained from taking military counteraction, fearing that such action would be frowned upon by Britain and the United States among other reasons. France submitted her grievances to the League, but refused point blank to deal directly with Germany as long as German troops remained in the Rhineland. France finally very grudgingly withdrew all open protest when Britain guaranteed her military backing in case of attack by Germany.²²⁸

The United States Government, in view of the fact that it had never wholly endorsed France's ideas in regard to the Rhineland, remained absolutely aloof in the dispute and American opinion favored the German rather than the French viewpoint. This was in spite of the French hope for American support or at least the support of American opinion.²²⁹

Italy saw in the German act an opportunity to ease the pressure upon herself. She chose France as the most likely to heed her proposal, which was to the effect that if France would persuade the League to ease up on the war sanctions, Italy would in turn pledge military aid to France in case of an attack by Germany. On the other side of the world, Japan backed the German action particularly because a strengthening of Germany in Europe would weaken the Franco-Soviet alliance. Japan was interested in having the Soviet Union involved as heavily as possible in European affairs and in the German action, Japan saw the possibility of furthering this idea.

The Little Entente and the Balkan Entente were perhaps the strongest supporters of the French viewpoint — a viewpoint which grew out of their profound distrust of Germany's eventual aims rather than from any particular attachment for France. All members of both alliances favored immediate German withdrawal and in the event this was not done, the placement of sanctions on Germany. An exception was Turkey, which after much shifting and fence-sitting, eventually came over to the British position.

Belgium felt itself more deeply involved in the Rhineland affair than any other nation. Furthermore, Belgium felt that she had been let down by France and Britain, in spite of her earlier refusals to be included in the protective French alliances. Thus she withdrew still more from

²²⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 310, March 20, 1936, col. 842-3.

²²⁸ In this regard, see Kennedy, *Why England Slept*, pp. 72-3.

²²⁹ In this regard, the day after Hitler's move, an urgent plea was transmitted to Washington from French Foreign Minister Flandin. He asked as a personal favor, because of England's vacillation, to call the situation to the American President's attention, with the request that some statement be made by him or the Secretary of State condemning, on moral grounds, any unilateral repudiation of a treaty. However, Cordell Hull replied that "we do not feel that we could appropriately make any comment at this time." When M. Flandin learned that the US Government would take no action, he voiced "some disappointment and expressed the hope that the American press might give some moral support to the French thesis." The US Ambassador in Berlin noted then that America's aloofness from Europe was a boon to Hitler's aggressive actions. *Foreign Relations of the United States*, V. I, 1936.

joint cooperation in European affairs, stating that she should maintain an attitude of "armed neutrality" against all aggressors.

Austria favored the German move, maintaining that the Allies had failed to create the promised "new era" in Europe, while Hungary, with about the same attitude as Austria's, stated that she was "cynically disgusted with the democracies for failing to curb the dictators."²³⁰

The Council of the League of Nations adopted a resolution which merely registered the fact that Germany was guilty of infractions of both the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Agreement and did not even discuss possible penalties.²³¹

To the Russians, the feeling that existed at the time of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, was confirmed. This was that Britain would not halt Germany as long as such aggression did not concern British interests. Thus Soviet Russia unequivocally backed the French viewpoint and was the leader of the movement to have the Rhineland dispute and the Franco-Soviet Treaty placed before the Hague Court.

Poland, while ready to back France with military action, saw that France was not going to take any action and she extricated herself by condemning the "regional principles" of Locarno. She further stated that since the source of tension in Europe could not be localized, peace had to be organized the same way.

Having examined world opinion generally, a closer examination of British opinion is valuable to this study, for only in the light of what the powers of the world were doing can an exact determination of British opinion and the resulting foreign policy of Britain be reached.²³²

OPINION IN PARLIAMENT

Nevertheless, when the Germans moved into the Rhineland, Mr. Eden's statements were well in advance of public opinion in Britain and of the majority of Conservatives in the House. His speeches indicated a deep appreciation of the situation, for he admitted that since Germany had committed a breach of the Locarno Treaty, France was entitled to take action and that if she did, Britain would have honored her obligations under those circumstances. He further noted a sthought on the public's mind that,

. . . there is, I am thankful to say, no reason to suppose that the present German action implies a threat of hostilities. The German Government spoke in their Memorandum of their "unchangeable longing for a real pacification of Europe," and express their willingness to conclude a non-aggression pact with France and Belgium.²³³

²³⁰ For more information on the world reaction, see Samuel H. Cuff's *The Face of the War, 1931-1942*.

²³¹ League of Nations Monthly Summary, V. 16, 1936, p. 78.

²³² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 311, May 6, 1936, col. 1830-1.

²³³ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 309, March 9, 1936, col. 1808, 1811.

Opinion in the House was primarily interested in Hitler's peace plan and what it included. On March 10, Sir Austen Chamberlain brought up this question by noting that it was in the minds of many and further questioned the Government as to whether Austria was included in the German offer of non-aggression pacts.²³⁴ Shortly after Mr. Eden indicated that Austria was not included, Hitler, in an interview with Mr. Price of the *Daily Mail*, asserted that both Austria and Czechoslovakia were included in his offer.²³⁵

On the whole, the House of Commons accepted with remarkable calmness the situation created by the Rhineland occupation due in no small part to the admirable and worthwhile statement made by Mr. Eden before he left for Paris. It appeared that seldom had a Government pronouncement of such importance received such a general measure of support.²³⁶ Only the extreme right wing of the Conservative Party criticised the Government for not going fast enough and far enough and the Laborites accused the Government of jockeying the country towards an inevitable war without the bridle of parliamentary control.²³⁷

On the other hand, Sir Arthur Sinclair voiced a common opinion when he noted

Let us remember that we, the States Members of the League, for too long failed to fulfil one of our obligations — our obligation to disarm. For too long we refused to recognise the equality of Germany... Nor, while we must condemn any violation of treaties, can we regard the occupation of German territory by German troops as so clearly indefensible, as an aggression against the territory of a member of the League. Let us then give calm and dispassionate study to these detailed constructive proposals for the removal of Germany's grievances and for securing European peace which Germany has at last tabled.²³⁸

Another segment of opinion was voiced by Sir Austen Chamberlain who refused to admit that dilatory action in disarmament could ever have been pleaded as justification for the unilateral breach of a treaty. He further asserted that "you cannot build peace in Europe if that is the mood of any great nation," and he did not hesitate in telling the House that the situation in Europe was "graver than at any time since 1914."²³⁹ The answer given to

²³⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1917.

²³⁵ *The Times*, March 11, 1936. The German notes on this interview are found in *Nazi Aggression and Conspiracy*, IV, 2292-PS, p. 995. As Mr. Kennedy indicates, Hitler was able to "cash in" on the good will that had been built up previously in Britain by Germany. Kennedy, *Why England Slept*, p. 67.

²³⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V, 309, March 9, 1936, col. 1808-14. M. Flandin noted that the Sunday press in Britain was not unduly indignant over Hitler's action. Flandin, *Politique Française, 1919-1940*, p. 201.

²³⁷ "The Defence Debate," *The Economist*, March 14, 1936, pp. 522-3. Mr. Ellis Smith reported that "... a few days after the Rhineland coup, speaking in corridor after corridor ... and saying that in my opinion Britain and France, through the League, ought to have taken the necessary action at that time, I found that in all parties there was a strong anti-French feeling developing and that in all parties there was a tendency to take Hitler's proposals at their face value." H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V, 311, April 23, 1936, col. 380-2.

²³⁸ H of C., *op. cit.*, V, 309, March 9, 1936, col. 1863-5.

²³⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V, 309, col. 1878. See also Seton-Watson, *Britain and the Dictators*, p. 235.

this charge by Sir Samuel Hoare probably represented that opinion which continued to believe that negotiation and diplomacy could avoid war then he urged that Britain remain cool, take no rash action and do the utmost to effect a reconciliation between the contending parties.²⁴⁰

It is well to note that even a week after the crisis, the Opposition in the House had acted with the utmost restraint. Opposition leaders had not pressed for a debate on the issue while the delicate negotiations were in progress and the backbenchers in the House temporarily refrained from asking the Government embarrassing questions. There appeared to be general agreement within all parties on the favorable attitude and actions of Mr. Eden at this time.²⁴¹

No evidence appears to support the suggestion that the House was sharply divided into pro-French and pro-German factions. The differences that did exist were concerned with the extent to which pressure could be placed on Germany to guarantee that further breaches of the Treaty did not occur. The general sentiment was well summed up by those who remarked that Britain should restrain France but not desert her.²⁴²

By the end of March, the House again became increasingly critical of the Government's actions in foreign affairs. The Opposition along with some of the Government supporters were completely bewildered by the foreign policy being followed by Britain. There was so much criticism and uncertainty that Mr. Eden late in March explained that,

I assure the House that it is the appeasement of Europe as a whole that we have constantly before us . . . Some people in this country could quickly produce an agreement that would suit Germany and ourselves. Others could produce an agreement that could suit France and ourselves. But if we are to get an agreement at all, we have to get them both at a table and our objective is to get them there.²⁴³

He concluded by stating that he was aware of the strong feeling in the country on this question, but that more could be accomplished by acting as the mediator and not fashioning Britain's foreign policy to any particular foreign power.²⁴⁴

The House, while not particularly favoring some of the proposals of the Locarno Powers, did not understand why the British Government, having once made some proposals, then went behind the back of France and came up with a personal appeal to Hitler to produce an alternative plan. To this, the Government's supporters could only reply that the appeal was put forward only as a basis of negotiations.²⁴⁵ If that were the case, asked the

²⁴⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1867.

²⁴¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 310, March 20, 1936, col. 842.

²⁴² H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 309, March 9, 1936, col. 1841; V. 310, March 20, 1936, col. 878-9. See also "Does Germany Mean Peace," *The Spectator*, March 25, 1936, pp. 500-1.

²⁴³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 310, March 26, 1936, col. 1446-8.

²⁴⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1449.

²⁴⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1398. See also "Notes," *The Spectator*, March 26, 1936, p. 563.

Opposition, what answer did the Government have for the inspired threats in the French press to the effect that France would leave the League if Hitler's alternative proposals were seriously considered?²⁴⁶

It was still the opinion of Sir Arthur Sinclair that full equality had to be given to Germany in order to secure European peace and that Hitler's words should be respected.²⁴⁷ His sentiments were shared by many in Britain. On the whole, then, it appeared that generally the House remained unmoved in regard to the weakening of Britain's position in Western Europe in spite of the strong warnings sounded by Mr. Churchill and the admission by the Government that information on German air strength had been startlingly inaccurate.²⁴⁸

OPINION FOLLOWS THE GOVERNMENT POLICY

British opinion faced a sharp and inescapable choice between a genuine European conciliation and another European war. *The Economist* summed up this feeling with the thought that if appeasement did not emerge from the crisis, the only alternative was war.²⁴⁹ Thus while opinion did not favor a war, first impressions in Britain were confused, and nervousness was not unmixed with a certain cynical relief which was much like that which followed the default on the British debt to the United States.²⁵⁰ Along with those who felt that Germany had had a pretty good right to occupy the Rhineland, a good part of British opinion did not even wish to risk war by armed intervention.²⁵¹ Pacifism had a wider range and deeper roots than was generally realised and as long as Hitler confined himself to reclaiming German territory and incorporating Germans within the Reich, many of the British people were not disposed to quarrel with him.²⁵²

Conservative opinion not only argued in terms of equality and self determination in the Rhineland, but also felt strongly that France still had her security in the Maginot line in spite of the remilitarized Rhineland. This explains to some extent why a good part of British opinion was so little disturbed by the reoccupation of the Rhineland.²⁵³ It was believed that France continued to be secure and that Germany could turn her attention toward Central Europe, a region which was a far-off place and of no concern to

²⁴⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1454-5. See also Flandin, *Politique Francaise, 1919-1940*, pp. 204-7.

²⁴⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1466-7.

²⁴⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 310, March 26, 1936, col. 1398. Lord Londonderry later asserted that he and the Air Ministry had accurate figures on German air power, but that Mr. Baldwin had ignored them. Lord Londonderry, *Wings of Destiny*, pp. 158-60.

²⁴⁹ "Peace on the Razor's Edge," *The Economist*, March 14, 1936, pp. 571-2.

²⁵⁰ *The Times*, March 21, 1936.

²⁵¹ "Hitler's Coup in the Rhineland," *The Spectator*, March 23, 1936, p. 453. It was at this time that Mr. Nicolson detected a wave of anti-French feeling in Britain and a definite pro-German group. H of C., *op. cit.*, col. 1496.

²⁵² This was the period of huge Lansbury peace meetings as well as open support by many of the notion of a Rome-Berlin-London axis, led by Lord Rothermere, *Daily Mail*, May 4 and 5, 1936 and September 27, 1936. See also Viscount Rothermere, *Warnings and Predictions*, pp. 155-65.

²⁵³ O of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 313, June 23, 1936, col. 1645-7.

Britain.²⁵⁴ However, an ever increasing minority in Britain realised that their country would soon be forced to make a policy decision — a decision which had long been avoided. This decision was emphasized by questions from Lloyd George and Mr. Lansbury, both of whom asked against whom were the Governments's new defense measures directed? If directed against Germany, as Lord George pointed out, then the whole defense program became irrelevant.²⁵⁵ It was observed that Hitler's action forced the British Government to decide whether or not peace could be secured in the West independently of future developments in Eastern and Central Europe. However, the British Prime Minister had indicated a course of isolation when he urged House acceptance of the new defense proposals.²⁵⁶

The Opposition asserted that modern war could not be localized in any one region of Europe and that if war started in one area, it would spread to all of Europe. Peace and security in the East and in the West were indivisible in the minds of these people. Hugh Dalton expressed the point with,

... The point that I wish to emphasize is that in Europe there are no quarrels which are not our own. If the peace of Europe is disturbed anywhere then it is disturbed everywhere.²⁵⁷

These arguments could not be denied by those who favored isolationism, but, on the other hand, these same people could not help thinking that the danger was in the chance of becoming involved in a conflict which did not directly concern Britain. Mr. Eden noted this feeling when he stated that "owing to obligations elsewhere, our neighbors may become involved in a conflict and may call for help in a quarrel that is not ours."²⁵⁸

The Labor Party drew a clear distinction between "aggressive war" beyond the frontiers of a country and other violations of international law, however reprehensible. Mr. Dalton declared on behalf of the Labor Party that the recent German action in the Rhineland did not call for military or economic sanctions on the part of Britain.²⁵⁹ This statement was issued at the very instant that the Laborites were vigorously demanding sanctions against Italy.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ "Peace on the Razor's Edge," *The Economist*, March 14, 1936, pp. 571—2. During these months of 1936, the new French Government was plagued with a series of crippling sit-down strikes, the French Air Force was rapidly becoming more obsolete each day and the French General Staff could not reach agreement on military policy. See the accounts in the Riom Tribunal.

²⁵⁵ H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 310, March 26, 1936, col. 1493.

²⁵⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, March 29, 1936, col. 348. Mr. Eden attempted during the crisis to create a fresh opportunity for the settlement of all Western European problems on a firm foundation. See also "The Defense Debate," *The Economist*, March 14, 1936, pp. 572—3.

²⁵⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 310, March 26, 1936, col. 1457, 1454. In spite of Sir Austen Chamberlain's statement that Locarno had given strength to the League, Mr. Attlee, speaking for the Labor Party, stated that "the Locarno Pact took a very big step in giving the League a twist out of its right course." See speech by Sir Austen Chamberlain, H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 299, March 11, 1935, col. 75, and Mr. Attlee, H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 310, March 26, 1936, col. 1535.

²⁵⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 310, March 26, 1936, col. 1443. See also speech by Sir John Simon at Lanark, August 27, 1938, *The Times*, August 29, 1938.

²⁵⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1454.

²⁶⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1457. *The Economist* followed Labor's lead when it wrote: "... The rights and wrongs of the Italian-Abyssinian conflict remain the same as what they were before any German soldiers entered the former demilitarized zone." *The Economist*, March 21, 1936, p. 637.

Thus it was generally accepted that the German offer of March 7th be seriously studied. Under the title of "A Chance to Rebuild," *The Times* optimistically suggested that Hitler's peace offer might be turned to good account as the opportunity for strengthening the collective system with Germany as an active partner. The same article continued with this statement,

. . . The old structure of European peace, one-sided and unbalanced, was nearly in ruins. It is the moment not to despair but to rebuild.²⁶¹

Another publication noted that at the theaters the picture of Ribbentrop arriving in England in the news had been greeted with cheers from the audiences for the reason that the British people felt that the offer of peace was coming with Ribbentrop and that when Hitler pledged peace, opinion was prone to forget his other war-like acts. Opinion seemed to favor Hitler's arguments more than the arguments of France.²⁶² The passion for peace continued strong in Britain and the foreign policy based on appeasement, while not recognized as such by many, received continued support from the people of Britain.

LATER GERMAN ACTIONS AND OPINION

Later in 1936, Germany continued her defiance of treaty obligations and British opinion was disposed to overlook them. In June, Germany re fortified Heligoland.²⁶³ This was in contravention of the terms of Article 115 of the Treaty of Versailles. The question of this newest violation was brought up in the House on June 22nd and since this is the only mention found on this incident in the House debates, it appears that opinion in Britain was indifferent or too occupied with other matters to take serious note of it. Therefore, since there was no demand from any quarter for action, the British Government did nothing about it.²⁶⁴

Still another violation occurred in November, 1936. Aside from stating in Parliament that it was a matter of regret that the Germans had resumed full sovereignty over the Kiel Canal and those German rivers which had been placed under an international regime by Part XII of the Treaty of Versailles. The Government refused to answer a question in the House as

²⁶¹ *The Times*, March 9, 1936.

²⁶² "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, March 25, 1936, p. 566. Mr. Nicolson believed that the British people felt that to insist upon the sanctity of treaties in the case of Germany might have exposed Britain to a second World War, which to the mass of people, suggested the air bombardment of London, while the prospect of war with Italy carried no such threat. The change in their attitude was, essentially, dictated by a fear of war and opinion allegedly escaped from such an admission by indulging in anti-French agitation and proclaiming that Germany had been badly treated in 1919 and was fully justified in revising such treatment. Harold Nicolson, "British Foreign Policy," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. VI, 1937, pp. 53-63. Interestingly enough, public opinion, as indicated by a poll conducted by the *Express* showed 55 percent favoring the German position, 24 percent favoring the German position, 24 percent the French, and 21 percent not interested. *Daily Express*, April 11, 1936.

²⁶³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 313, June 24, 1936, col. 1743-4.

²⁶⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 313, June 22, 1936, col. 1411. The Government refused to consider a request for the publication of a White Paper setting out those treaties to the breaking of which Britain would take exception to and those it would not.

to whether or not anything was left of the Treaty of Versailles and if not, what possible confidence could be placed on any agreement with Germany?²⁶⁵ In spite of the small protest recorded on the latest German violation, opinion was again indifferent to Germany's most recent move.

Even by January of 1937 when Germany demanded that prior authorization was needed from the German Government for the passage through the Kiel Canal of foreign warships, the British Government's position in the eyes of British opinion was so secure that it could safely, and did, refuse to take any action on the new violation.²⁶⁶

Thus there is the picture of British opinion mildly condoning these breaches by Germany appeared because the British people, although aware of Germany's aggressiveness, did not see the menace and hoped that Hitler would be appeased and eventually brought into a peaceful organization of European states.

²⁶⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 317, November 9, 1936, col. 906; November 16, 1936, col. 1334-5.

²⁶⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 319, January 25, 1936, col. 547-8.

CHAPTER IV

OPINION IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Two weeks after the League of Nations withdrew the sanctions against Italy, factions within the Spanish Republic started on a civil war which was to be one of the bitterest fought in all history.²⁶⁷

The Spanish war represented the first clash upon the field of battle between the force of free governments and those of totalitarian governments. This was indicated by the presence of the International Brigade fighting with the Spanish Government and German and Italian "volunteers" serving with France forces. Russia's support of the Spanish Government made the issue more complex.²⁶⁸

The immediate reaction of Britain to the Spanish war was to maintain a strict neutrality and to localize the conflict if at all possible. Thus the European Non-Intervention Committee was formed. While the Committee wanted an arms embargo on both sides, it was obvious to British opinion early in the war that only Britain and France were living up to the terms of the embargo.²⁶⁹

While arms and men continued to arrive in Spain, the Axis Powers openly hoped for a Franco victory while Russia promised all possible aid to the Spanish Government.²⁷⁰ British ships were bombed and a German warship "revenged" an attack on a sister ship.

Yet amid these issues, the Non-Intervention Committee dragged out its life. It labored hard, but it was impossible to get full cooperation from all the nations involved. Aside from the Nyon Agreement, its record was almost one of complete failure. Neither were the efforts of Mr. Eden to reach a

²⁶⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 315, July 20, 1936, col. 41; July 27, 1936, col. 1126. For a detailed account of the diplomacy involved, see Vera Micheles Dean, "European Diplomacy in the Spanish Crisis," *Foreign Policy Reports*, V. 12, 1936, pp. 222-32.

²⁶⁸ A great deal of light is thrown on Axis diplomacy in Spain by *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, V. III, and *Documents Secrets du Ministère des Affaires étrangères d'Allemagne*. Traduit du russe par Madeleine et Michel Eristov. Espagne (Paris, 1946). The former volume indicates that all nations, including Germany, were taken by surprise at the outbreak of the Civil War.

²⁶⁹ The Opposition made much of the alleged strong British pressure on France to announce the policy. *The Times*, October 24, 1936. See also H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 316, October 29, 1936, col. 99-100. See Mr. Eden's denial of pressure on France. H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 42-3. See Kingsley Martin, "Fair Play," *Political Quarterly*, V. 7, 1936, p. 578; "France Under M. Blum: Foreign Policy," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 17, 1936, p. 576; M. Flaudin, *Politique française, 1919-1940*, pp. 215-6.

²⁷⁰ *The Times*, October 16, 1936; November 19, 1936.

direct agreement with Italy for the withdrawal of Italian volunteers any more successful.²⁷¹

It was the misfortune of Britain and France that by their actual policy of non-intervention, they indicated to their opponents how ineffectual their policy could be and was, and to their friends how undependable they were. In Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the smaller nations viewed with deep concern the successes of the Axis Powers and many of these small nations felt that they should seek guarantees from the Axis Powers while Russia began to believe seriously that Britain and France were attempting to divert Germany eastward.

Probably the most important significance of the Non-Intervention Committee's program and the resulting failure was its effect on British opinion.

OPINION IN BRITAIN

The Spanish war took opinion by surprise in Britain. The best informed papers had previously noted that the Liberal Government would be upset. When it was definitely announced by competent correspondents like Sir Persival Phillips of the *Telegraph* that the Axis Powers were actively aiding the rebel forces, the danger of war spreading became obvious to opinion.²⁷²

In Britain, Conservative and Catholic opinion favored Franco, but gave no indication of favoring intervention. The Labor and Liberal body of opinion, with same reluctance, endorsed the policy of non-intervention at the outset.²⁷³

In a similar manner, the different sides of opinion as represented in the press were soon apparent. The difficulties of papers like *The Times* were made immediately obvious by the use of words and groups of words to describe the two parties fighting in Spain. There was little doubt that the law was on the side of the Spanish Government and that Franco was staging a rebellion. While the press of the Right in Britain insisted with Mr. Churchill that the Spanish Government was too weak and did not represent the wishes of a majority of the Spanish people and that therefore Britain was entitled to regard both sides as belligerents, the Left press made the most of having the law on its side for once.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 327, October 22, 1937, col. 103-4; 181-2. See *Cmd 5348* for papers on the Gentleman's Agreement of 1937.

²⁷² *Daily Telegraph*, August 6, 1936. Opinion realized that the Spanish war was not provoked by the Communists in Spain or Moscow. See Charles A. Thomson, "Spain: Issues Behind the Conflict," *Foreign Policy Reports*, January 1, 1937, pp. 246-56.

²⁷³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 315, July 31, 1936, col. 1203. See also the report of the Conference of the Parliamentary Labor Party, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the National Executive of the Labor Party at Transport House, London, August 28, 1936, in *The Times*, August 29, 1936; *Daily Telegraph*, August 29, 1936; "Labor Speaks," *Daily Herald*, August 29, 1936; "Spain," *Daily Herald*, August 26, 1936.

²⁷⁴ The German Embassy in London reported on the confusion in Britain by noting that a Spanish Government victory was not desired by a large part of British opinion because such a victory would mean a strengthening of Communism, yet on the other hand, these same people saw the dangers for British interests in a rebel victory, particularly those interests in the Mediterranean. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 19.

The result was a strange confusion of opinion on the entire issue. For example, the result in *The Times* was amusingly analysed by Julian Huxley in a letter to another publication. Mr. Huxley indicated how words like "revolt" and "mutiny" which *The Times* had used in describing Franco's uprising during the early days of the Civil War had increasingly given way to more favorably colored words like "anti-government" and "Right" while the reverse process had turned "loyal" forces into "proletarian" and "Communist" forces.²⁷⁵

However, the decision by M. Blum to work toward a policy of non-intervention by all foreign powers was well received by the entire British press. While the Liberal and Socialist press accepted this as an unfortunate necessity, the Conservative press hailed M. Blum's action as proof of the highest statesmanship.²⁷⁶

During this period, the Britain press was roughly divided into five groups. On the extreme left was the *Daily Worker*, which interestingly enough developed during this crisis into something much more like a national paper than it had ever been before. In the second group, the *Herald* and the much more positive *News Chronicle* took their places, while in the third and middle group, *The Times* and *Telegraph*, and from the point of view of policy, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Post* occupied the scene. Lord Beaverbrook's purely isolationist press was in the fourth group, while on the extreme right were the Catholic papers, the *Observer*, and all of the Rothermere papers.

In the course of the struggle, even the calm *Spectator* took issue with the attitude of the Rothermere press as worse than outrageous. This was the result of the attitude of the Rothermere press and from the outset, the *Mail*, *News*, *Sunday Dispatch* and *Daily Dispatch* abandoned all fair reporting and described all anti-Fascist groups in Spain as Reds and Communists and created atrocity stories committed by the loyal Spanish forces. For example, the *Mail* reported nothing of the slaughter of innocent citizens at the capture of Badajez nor the British ban on volunteers.²⁷⁷

Of the four Catholic weeklies, the *Universe* and the *Catholic Times* followed closely the *Mail's* policy. While all four of the Catholic publi-

²⁷⁵ Julian Huxley, "Letter," *The New Statesman and Nation*, August 8, 1936, p. 253. The BBC adopted the sensible policy of stating without comment that the news was contradictory and left listeners to form their own conclusions from its summaries of rival broadcasts. Kingsley Martin, "Spain and British Public Opinion," *Political Quarterly*, V. 7, 1936, pp. 573-87.

²⁷⁶ *The Times*, August 14, 1936; *Daily Herald*, August 17, 1936; *Daily Telegraph*, August 25, 1936; *News Chronicle*, September 2, 1936. The diplomatic correspondent of the *Post*, in considering the situation in Spain, took the view that these events and the general insecurity in the international situation attending them might lead to a postponement of the meeting of the Five Powers. *Morning Post*, July 31, 1936. This view was cited in a report to Berlin by the German Embassy in London. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 19.

²⁷⁷ *Daily Mail*, August 17, 1936; January 5, 1936. It is only fair to add here that later the Rothermere press reverted to a nonintervention attitude, clearly as a result of the conviction that if Britain and France did intervene, Franco would win with the continued and expanded help of the Axis Powers.

cations in Britain enthusiastically hailed the Pope's denunciation of the Spanish Government as the representative of anti-Christ, the *Tablet* and the *Catholic Herald* both adopted a moderate attitude and for the most part were fair at reporting events and can be considered a better reflection of opinion.²⁷⁸

The *Express* soon became impartial, although in the early stages of the war, it was guilty of printing unsubstantiated atrocity reports. In so far as Spain was dealt with in all leading articles, the only object of the Beaverbrook press was to support Sir Samuel Hoare's declaration that England must in no circumstances become involved in the Spanish struggle. Finally the Beaverbrook press reached the point of denouncing the Rothermere policy, which it argued, amounted to a policy of intervention on the side of the rebels and was as dangerous as Socialist pressure for aid to the Loyalists.²⁷⁹

Both *The Times* and the *Telegraph* which had begun by making clear that their sympathies were on the side of the rebels, soon shifted away from that position. The turning point was at the massacre of Badajez, which coincided with British opinion's realisation of the growing danger of an general European war. Then both these papers became noticeably keener in encouraging Italy and Germany to cooperate with the Non-Intervention Committee.²⁸⁰

The *Telegraph*, with its vast network of associated papers, probably provided one of the best indicators of where Conservative opinion stood at any particular moment in the period under study, was perhaps less fair in the reporting of true facts, but followed the lead of *The Times*. Like *The Times*, the *Telegraph* became more troubled about the danger to British interests and the greater danger of a general war, if Germany continued to hesitate in joining the non-interventionists.²⁸¹

The attitude of the *Post* followed the same line with some small variations. It praised the British Government's efforts to make non-intervention effective.²⁸² And the *Manchester Guardian*, as always distinguished by its fair and impartial reporting, took a new line late in August when it suggested that the time had come for an appeal "through the international conscience" for a cessation of the war.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ *Catholic Herald*, August 21, 1936; *Catholic Times*, August 27, 1936; *Tablet*, September 3, 1936; *Universe*, August 28, 1936.

²⁷⁹ *Daily Express*, August 21, 1936. Later the *Evening Standard* stated that "Britain has no interest in the war." *Evening Standard*, February 23, 1937.

²⁸⁰ *The Times*, August 20, 1936. However, some months later, this paper gave the most prominent place at the head of its correspondence column to a letter from Sir Charles Oman, who argued that the responsibility for the sufferings of Madrid lay on the Government forces who choose to defend it. *The Times*, December 1, 1936.

²⁸¹ *Daily Telegraph*, August 20, 1936. This paper felt that when Italy and Germany adhered to the ban on volunteers, all danger of a European war was removed. *Daily Telegraph*, January 26, 1937.

²⁸² *Morning Post*, August 21, 1936.

²⁸³ *Manchester Guardian*, August 21, 1936.

In the consideration of Left opinion, the *Herald* was naturally from the beginning on the side of the Spanish Government. It grew increasingly impatient with the prevarication of Italy and Germany and with the atrocity-mongering of the Right press.²⁸⁴

The *Chronicle* was more bold than the *Herald*. This paper declared that the democracies would have to take a stand at some point and present a bold front to Fascism. Later, while reminding the Trades Union Council that it had opposed neutrality, the *Chronicle* asked why the Council had not acted on this declaration.²⁸⁵

The *Daily Worker* argued that the Spanish Government should have been aided with all the supplies it needed and it urged this action increasingly during the Civil War as the extent of aid by Germany and Italy to Franco became more and more widely known.²⁸⁶

Surveying the press as a whole, it is seen that the same odd alignment of the British press which developed during the Abyssinian war was maintained during the Spanish Civil War and that British opinion became less sympathetic to the Spanish Government as the dangers and methods of Fascist intervention became known. However, the number of those who would have actively aided the Spanish Government was not great.²⁸⁷ But opinion favored any effort would diminish the horror of fighting and at the same time the predominant body of opinion felt that war must at all costs be confined to Spain. England was becoming increasingly fearful of Germany, but saw no reason for welcoming Russia as an ally. Thus, British opinion including the Right and most of the Left, favored "isolationism", but Lord Beaverbrook remained almost alone in thinking this a useful policy in practice.

OPINION DEBATES THE ISSUE

On July 31st and August 1st of 1936, the first debate on the Spanish issue took place in the British Parliament. It was clear at the end of the debates that the differences that had separated the parties on foreign policy had narrowed and although on some occasions, the Labor Party leaders felt compelled to whip up some party politics, it was not reflected among the more thoughtful rank and file of Laborites. Thus it was seen in this first debate on Spain that the speech of Mr. Noel-Baker might have been made

²⁸⁴ *Daily Herald*, August 18, 21, 1936. As late as February, 1937, the *Herald* stated that unless the Axis Powers cut off all aid to Franco, the Western democracies should sell such war materials to the Spanish Government until such time as "a general non-intervention agreement is reached and observed." *Daily Herald*, February 13, 1937.

²⁸⁵ *News Chronicle*, August 19, 22, 1936. Vernon Bartlett, in following the proceedings of the Non-Intervention Committee, hinted more than once that the British Government secretly desired a Franco victory. Vernon Bartlett, "The Tragedy of Spain," *News Chronicle*, February 18, 1937.

²⁸⁶ *Daily Worker*, August 21, 1936.

²⁸⁷ Charles Fenby arrived at the same conclusion, that while it was impossible for opinion worthy of the name to be non-partisan, nevertheless, the mass of British opinion was negative on this subject. Charles Fenby, "British Public Opinion on Spain," *The Political Quarterly*, V. 8, 1937, pp. 248-58

by Harold Nicolson or Arthur Henderson, who while predicating that if British action failed in Spain, there would be more aggression. He criticised the Government so mildly that his words might have been echoed by any keen League man on the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee.²⁸⁸

As previously indicated in the survey of the press, at the time Badajoz fell, opinion swung away from the support of the rebel forces. It was noted that with the fall of that city, the entire press with the exception of the *Mail* carried leading articles describing the massacres which began to shape opinion at the time.²⁸⁹

It appeared that the great mass of opinion in Britain leaned more toward keeping out for war. This was strikingly indicated by a poll conducted by the *Express* which asked its readers whether they would prefer to side with Berlin, Moscow, or neither one in any conflict. Out of the fifty-five thousand who answered the poll, forty-three thousand picked neither Berlin or Moscow.²⁹⁰

The effort to form a popular front in Britain at this time for the purpose of combatting the threat of Fascism was rejected for the same reason, that is, the mass of opinion had no desire to see Britain take part in someone else's wars. In addition, Mr. Baldwin's policy, already moving down the path of appeasement, was not unpopular at the time.²⁹¹

By late October, however, the House was making the British Government's position very uncomfortable. Arthur Greenwood embarrassed the Government when he pointed out that the very silence of the Government supporters on the reported violations to the non-intervention agreement was significant.²⁹² And Sir Arthur Sinclair was critical of the Government for not taking every possible step to convince opinion in Britain that the Government was not actuated by any sympathy for one side in Spain and further, that the Government was desirous of hushing up any information which might have been available on the situation.²⁹³

Mr. Attlee, while demanding help for the Spanish Government, had this to say in regard to Britain's policy in Spain as Labor saw it:

²⁸⁸ Speech by Mr. Noel-Baker, H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 315, July 31, 1936, col. 1910 and Arthur Henderson, col. 1891—4. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, August 7, 1936, p. 223. The German Charge d'Affaires in London correctly reported that the impression was that Britain and France were not so much interested in the non-intervention committee's early establishment as in pacifying the aroused feelings of the Leftist parties in both countries by the very establishment of the Committee. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 79.

²⁸⁹ *The Times*, August 17, 1936. The *Mail* noted this as "a brilliant feat." *Daily Mail*, August 18, 1936. For two informative articles on this swing of opinion, see Kingsley Martin, "Spain and British Public Opinion," *Political Quarterly*, V. 7, 1936, pp. 573—87, and "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, August 21, 1936, p. 298.

²⁹⁰ *Daily Express*, September 16, 1936. One publication noted that this was about right, in spite of the editorial policy of the paper conducting the poll. "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, September 25, 1936, p. 486.

²⁹¹ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, October 2, 1936, p. 534.

²⁹² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 316, October 29, 1936, col. 54—9. See also *The Times*, October 28, 1936.

²⁹³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 64—9. The Government at a later date admitted that it was aware of these violations at the time.

... I should have thought that the history of the last five years would show the Government how dangerous it is. Once you give way on one point, you are driven from point to point, and I think that in the situation in which we are placed today, the method that has been successful in Spain may be tried elsewhere.²⁹⁴

Mr. Maxton, Colonel Wedgwood, and Mr. Roberts echoed these sentiments, all of which indicated some popular feeling against the Government's policy in Spain.²⁹⁵

Both Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Eden stood fast on the position that Britain's policy was the only policy that could avoid a general European war and opinion appeared to favor this view.²⁹⁶

Then during November of 1936, at the height of the Spanish controversy in Britain, two notable speeches were made on British foreign policy. Mr. Eden at Leamington gave the aims of British policy which he stated were democracy and freedom at home, peace abroad and he outlined the details of applying that policy in Europe. His statement commanded the widest support from opinion.²⁹⁷

A few days later, Mr. Churchill gave a strong speech at the New Commonwealth Association luncheon. In it, his "defense of peace and freedom" manifesto was backed solidly by the League of Nations Union, the New Commonwealth Association, Sir Austen Chamberlain, Liberals like Sir Herbert Samuel and Sir Archibald Sinclair, Laborites like Sir Walter Citrine, Dr. J. J. Mallon and Mr. A. M. Wall and even Lloyd George.²⁹⁸

By early December, the House was debating the bill on arms carrying to Spain in British ships. The Labor Party took this opportunity to raise the whole question of intervention and again demanded aid for the Spanish Government. Even among the Government supporters, there was unrest as shown by their concern over Italian intentions in the Balearic Islands.²⁹⁹ But the Government was able to calm opinion, at least within the Conservative Party, by reporting that Italy had given Britain assurances that no Italian occupation of the islands was contemplated.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 316, October 29, 1936, col. 138-9.

²⁹⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 74-5; 79-90; 124. The British Labor Party and Trades Union Council, which had hitherto acquiesced in the Government's non-intervention policy as the lesser of two evils, demanded at this time that Britain take the lead in restoring to the Loyalist's the right to purchase arms abroad. *The Times*, October 29, 1936.

²⁹⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 39-41; 142-52. While the mass of opinion backed the Government's policy, some Britains came to wish for Franco's defeat after the massacres were reliably reported. H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 126. This trend was noted by the German Charge d'Affaires in London. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 131.

²⁹⁷ Speech by Mr. Eden at Leamington on November 20, 1936. *The Times*, November 21, 1936.

²⁹⁸ Speech by Mr. Churchill, New Commonwealth Association, November 25, 1936, *The Times*, November 26, 1936. See also "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, November 27, 1936, p. 936. It should be noted that Mr. Churchill lost most of his support shortly after this as a result of his support for the King during the Constitutional crisis.

²⁹⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 318, December 1, 1936, col. 963-8, 989-91. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, December 4, 1936, p. 977.

³⁰⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 977.

Again just before the Christmas recess, the Governmental policy of non-intervention was again debated, all of which indicated growing interest by opinion on the issue. It was noteworthy in that the debate was carried on by the rank and file members of the House. In spite of the indication of growing public interest on events in Spain, the main attention of the House at this time was centered on the constitutional crisis and even the speeches of members who had been on personal fact-finding trips into Spain failed to hold the interest of members in the House.³⁰¹

Opinion appeared to accept the words of Mr. Eden that

. . . I should like to see the Government in Spain that Spain wants, and that is the whole motive behind our support of the policy of non-intervention . . . If anybody thinks that the fact that we support non-intervention is due to feelings of sympathy for one side or the other, they are mistaken. We are supporting this policy because we believe it to be the best for Europe at this time . . .³⁰²

Early in January, 1937, the British Government applied the Foreign Enlistment Act in an effort to halt the increasing number of British volunteers flowing into Spain.³⁰³ This aroused criticism from the Opposition who took the occasion to indicate their dislike for the weakness of the British Cabinet in imposing a unilateral British naval blockade of Spain to make non-intervention more effective.³⁰⁴

During the remainder of January, opinion in the House was not so divided as appeared in the record. No one challenged the good of non-intervention provided it could be made effective. But the clash of ideologies was very evident. Mr. Greenfell, with more foresight than most British opinion, developed the thought that while the Spanish war was not a class war, "you cannot keep the peace of Europe, if you give ground all the way to the Nazis and Fascists."³⁰⁵

While Mr. Maxton tried to show how the Government's policy up to that time had actually prolonged the struggle,³⁰⁶ Mr. Attlee was bitter as he

³⁰¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, December 18, 1936, col. 2817-61. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, December 25, 1936, pp. 1109-10 and K. Feiling, *Life of Chamberlain*, p. 288. At the time, Mr. Eden approached the German Ambassador, Ribbentrop, in regard to a joint mediation offer by the six European powers for settlement of the Spanish war, but nothing came of it. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 147.

³⁰² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 318, December 18, 1936, col. 2852-3. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 186.

³⁰³ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 319, January 19, 1937, col. 96. See also "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, January 22, 1937, p. 109. The Mail published this without comment. *Daily Mail*, January 20, 1937. For texts of the British appeals to Germany to halt volunteers to Spain, see *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 165, 184.

³⁰⁴ One publication called the Government's action as out of place and even ineffective as a moral example compared to the help going to Spain from the Axis. "Notes," *The Economist*, January 16, 1937, p. 109.

³⁰⁵ H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 319, January 19, 1937, col. 161. One paper probably expressed opinion well when it stated that there was little doubt that the Government had a preponderance of British opinion behind it in its determination to strive to the last possible moment to avoid an "ideological war." *The Christian World*, January 21, 1937.

³⁰⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 319, January 19, 1937, col. 137-9.

attacked the Anglo-Italian Declaration. He accused the Government of making pacts with the Fascist States when they were committing acts of aggression as in the case of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. He concluded that,

... We believe in democracy, but if democracy is to survive, it must be prepared to stand up to the dictators.³⁰⁷

Mr. Eden had his hands full in answering all the charges hurled at the Government's policy. Thus while explaining away the reported arrival of German troops in Spanish Morocco, he spoke of the Anglo-Italian Declaration in this manner:

... It neither calls for nor embodies any concession from us, neither of course, does it involve any modification of any one our existing friendships. But that this declaration has been of service to an appeasement in the Mediterranean there can be no manner of doubt ...

And again Mr. Eden had to answer the rumors that the Italians had designs on the Balearic Islands by stating that Italy had given assurances once again that no action in that direction was planned by Italy.³⁰⁸

Regarding Britain's foreign policy, Mr. Eden stated that its object was

... the negotiation of an European settlement and the strengthening of the authority of the League of Nations. We are prepared to cooperate in the common work of political appeasement and economic cooperation ... Economic collaboration and political appeasement must go hand in hand ...

And in regard to Germany, he added that

... if she choose cooperation with other nations, there is nobody in this country who will not assist wholeheartedly to remove misunderstandings and to make the way smooth for peace and prosperity.³⁰⁹

That British opinion was overwhelmingly pacifist and favored the policy of appeasement was clearly demonstrated by a poll taken in January, 1937, which found that seventy-five percent of opinion in Britain did not favor compulsory military training.³¹⁰

However the road that the Government was following was no easy one. With continuing reports of new Italian troop arrivals in Spain during

³⁰⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 109-16. Reports of the strength and nationality of the various units fighting in Spain are cited in Charles A. Thomson's "Spain: Civil War," *Foreign Policy Reports*, January 15, 1937, pp. 258-69.

³⁰⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 103-4. See also "Italy and Britain," *The Economist*, January 2, 1937, p. 8 and "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, January 22, 1937, p. 111.

³⁰⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, January 19, 1937, col. 106-8.

³¹⁰ "The British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. 4., March 1940, pp. 77-82. Hereafter in this study, the dates given by the British Institute of Public Opinion refer to the time ballots were sent to the interviewers rather than to the time the information was released. These dates were not verified, but there is every reason to believe that they are at least approximately accurate.

February, sections in the House as well as in the press strongly criticised the Government's policy. The Government could only state that the war had been confined to Spain.³¹¹ Mr. Attlee accused the Government of not even being interested in "imperial interests" any longer while *The Economist* pointed out the similarity in the work of the Non-Intervention Committee in Spain and the League of Nations in the Abyssinian War.³¹²

By March, the Government was having real difficulty in answering Opposition charges. It appears that opinion for intervention gained strength during this period as indicated by the curious fact that cries of "Russia," etc, were no longer shouted in the House debates when Fascist breaches of the non-intervention policy were listed.³¹³

THE BILBAO BLOCKADE AND OPINION

Early in April, Mr. Eden in a speech at Liverpool, again stated that the object of the Government's policy was to avert war. He added that Britain could not take sides, as it would only divide Europe into two armed camps.³¹⁴ It was accurately noted by one publication that there was little opinion in Britain that doubted the wisdom of these principles and that these principles commanded the assent of both the Conservatives and the Opposition.³¹⁵

But during the latter part of April, the question of British shipping and the Bilbao blockade commanded the attention of the House and the country. The Opposition was not able to prove that the Government had wavered from the policy set early in April when Mr. Baldwin had stated that there would be no interference with British shipping on the high seas, but that British vessels entering Spanish territorial waters around Bilbao would do so at their own risk.³¹⁶

Conservative members of the House were surprised that the Opposition attempted to attach so much electoral importance to the blockade as there had been no indication in their own constituencies that there was any rising public support for the indignant protests of the Laborites that the British Government should have forced a passage for food shipments into Bilbao.³¹⁷

But there was acute public dissatisfaction with the British Government's action in warning British food ships, particularly in the light of Franco's

³¹¹ H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 320, February 10, 1937, col. 376; February 11, 1937, col. 561-2. One publication noted "that the British and French seemed intent on facilitating the victory of Fascism in Spain." *The Economist*, February 13, 1937, p. 350; "The Tragedy of Spain," *News Chronicle*, February 13, 1937. This was noted by the German Ambassador to Britain. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 239.

³¹² H of C., *Ibid.*, February 13, 1937, col. 1500; February 24, 1937, col. 1971-4.

³¹³ "Non-Intervention at Last," *The Economist*, February 27, 1937, pp. 450-1.

³¹⁴ *The Times*, April 13, 1937.

³¹⁵ "The Problem of Bilbao," *The Spectator*, April 16, 1937, pp. 697-8. See also "Profit and Loss in Spain," *The Economist*, April 10, 1937, pp. 66-7.

³¹⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 322, April 13, 1937, col. 567.

³¹⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, April 20, 1937, col. 1809. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, April 23, 1937, p. 747.

threat of April 10th. This confession by the Government suggested that Britain merely bowed to illegal threats by a rebel to whom Britain had declined to accord the status of a belligerent. In addition, there was dissatisfaction when it was shown that the Government's contention that Bilbao was mined which was in fact not true.³¹⁸

A NEW PRIME MINISTER GAINS SUPPORT

On May 28, 1937, in the midst of the Spanish controversy, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. MacDonald who, between them had governed Britain as successive Prime Ministers for the preceding thirteen years with the exception of one short period, both retired from Government Office. Neville Chamberlain took over as Prime Minister and Lord Halifax became Lord President of the Council.³¹⁹

Neville Chamberlain had his own ideas on what British foreign policy should be and in a series of speeches both in the House and elsewhere, he early explained the two objects which British policy must be aimed at, namely, "the reestablishment of Britain's defense forces," and "the removal of the causes which were delaying the return of condence in Europe."³²⁰ He wrote then that,

... I am about to enter upon a fresh attempt to reach a reasonable understanding with both Italy and Germany, and I am by no means unhopeful of getting results . . .³²¹

It should be noted that when Mr. Chamberlain became Prime Minister, his attitude toward peace and war was very representative of British national reaction at the time. British opinion had reached the point of recognising the necessity for increased armaments because of the growing danger of war in Europe, but in the process the deep-seated horror of war held by opinion actually increased. Thus when Chamberlain repudiated any and all ideas of re-dividing the world into two armed camps, he was undoubtedly expressing the thought uppermost in the minds of a majority in Britain.³²²

It appears, then, that the fear of the new type of warfare being used in Abyssinia and Spain caused British opinion to support increased defense

³¹⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 322, April 20, 1937, col. 1822. See also "Spain's Frontiers and the Powers," *The Economist*, April 24, 1937, pp. 196-7. See comments on this by German Ambassador to Spain. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 254.

³¹⁹ *The Times*, June 1, 1937. Mr. Chamberlain's desire for peace are well commented on by M. Bonnett, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, pp. 107-9.

³²⁰ Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, p. 319. The principal speeches by Mr. Chamberlain appear in Neville Chamberlain, *Struggle for Peace* (1939) which covers the period from May, 1937 to May, 1939.

³²¹ Letter to Mrs. Morton Price, Boston, Mass., dated January 18, 1938. Feiling, *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³²² N. Chamberlain, *Struggle for Peace*, pp. 5-6; K. Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 325-6.

burdens, but it also tended to make opinion endorse almost any policy which would prevent Britain's defenses ever being used.⁵²³

It should be noted that the most obstinate resistance which the Government had to overcome was the deeply ingrained popular aversion to anything connected with war and "militarism." Faith in collective security, which had replaced the earlier pacifism did little to reduce the opposition to Britain's rearmament program.

There were those who felt that Britain should place full faith in the League of Nations as the best means of maintaining peace. This group included Lords Cecil and Davis in the upper House and the entire Labor Party in the lower House. Mr. Eden, while being a strong League supporter, pointed out that certain weaknesses existed in the League structure and that it was of no use closing one's eyes to that unpleasant fact.⁵²⁴

An important factor influencing opinion at the time was the attitude of other nations and their respective policies in regard to the sources of international tension. For example, the United States, having picked its way somehow through the stormy Ethiopian crisis and the initial phase of the Spanish Civil War, found itself confronted in the summer of 1937 by the formidable through undeclared war of Japan against China.

The British, by this time, with Neville Chamberlain in charge and more directly menaced by aggression than the United States, had reversed themselves to the extent of proposing "joint action" in an effort to induce the Japanese to cease hostilities and accept a peaceful settlement. In this connection, such cooperative action would almost certainly have been more acceptable to the Americans in the Far East than in Europe partly because of American feeling for China and dislike for Japan, not only because of the Japanese aggression, but because Japan had openly broken international agreements to which the United States was a party. To this should be added the fact that Japanese power was not held in high regard by Americans and that therefore, it was thought that a strong stand in Asia would be less risky than a firm attitude toward the European dictators.

The above, in part, explains why British opinion at the time so readily accepted Neville Chamberlain's program for maintaining and preserving the peace of Europe. Opinion, and the Government, in arriving at a policy, kept in mind the national aims and policies of the other powers and reacted accordingly. Deep-rooted beliefs as well played no small part in the popular acceptance of the new Prime Minister's policies.

Meanwhile, events in Spain had brought about a change in British policy in that area. Late in April, after the House had shown dissatisfaction

⁵²³ See Mr. Churchill's statements in the House on this new type of warfare as well as the warnings made by Lord Trenchard regarding the bombers that would surely be over Britain in the event of war.

⁵²⁴ Anthony Eden, *Foreign Affairs* (1939), pp. 21-2. In the middle of May, shortly before Neville Chamberlain took office, the British Government had again unsuccessfully attempted to bring about a truce in Spain for the purpose of withdrawing all foreign volunteers fighting there. See *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 260.

with the Government's continued action of only protesting Franco's bombings of British ships and over such barbarities as Guernica,³²⁵ the Government in May bowed to this pressure and adopted a policy of protection for British shipping which had been long demanded by many outside the Government.³²⁶ However, this did not indicate that opinion was willing to go to war. A poll taken at the time found that while those choosing between Communism and Fascism were evenly divided, forty-six percent or almost half, preferred to back neither one.³²⁷ Russia, through Mr. Litvinov, aided this feeling by criticizing whether at Geneva or Brussels, Fascist aggression on one hand and the League and its weaknesses on the other.³²⁸

By the end of June, there appeared to be little difference in the desire of each party for peace. The only difference was over the best method for achieving peace. The debates centered around the "Deutschland" and "Leipzig" incidents in May and June.³²⁹ Mr. Eden was forced to appeal to House Members to say nothing that might increase the tension. The average member of Parliament appeared bewildered by the quick march of events, but felt for the most part, that Mr. Eden's advice about having patience was worthwhile.

The results of a poll taken during this critical period prove of value in determining the tide of opinion. Opinion appeared to regard the increased tension in Spain as a purely local affair as indicated by the poll which found that in May, eighty-three percent of opinion in Britain believed that Britain would be drawn into a major European war, while by June, this percentage had dropped to seventy-five. Additionally, while seventy-four percent believed that Britain should continue to support the League in early June, eighty-five percent felt that it should be supported by late June.³³⁰

During July, the Government was severely censured by the Opposition for continuing to allow the non-intervention controls to be so ineffective. To counter this, Neville Chamberlain, in making his maiden speech on foreign affairs in the House as Prime Minister, used a strategy then which was to be useful in the trying years ahead of him. He stated that Britain was "in the condition" where an incantious move or a sudden loud exclamation

³²⁵ Ribbentrop noted that almost the entire British press gave satisfactory publicity to his statement regarding the Guernica incident with the exception of the *Daily Herald* and *News Chronicle*. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 253.

³²⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 323, May 10, 1937, col. 762. See also "Spain and Europe," *The Economist*, May 8, 1937, pp. 322-3.

³²⁷ "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. 4, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

³²⁸ This was also at the time of the treason trials in Russia.

³²⁹ H of C., *op. cit.*, V 325, June 5, 1937, col. 159; *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 273 and 275. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, July 2, 1937. The crisis had arisen when the German cruiser "Leipzig" shelled a Spanish town in retaliation for an attack. A visit had been planned by the Foreign Minister to London on June 23 and 24 for a discussion of Anglo-German relations including the Spanish problem on Britain's initiative, but was cancelled as a result of the tension existing at this time. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 350.

³³⁰ "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. 4, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

might start an avalanche into war. He concluded that "I believe, although the snow may be perilously poised, it has yet begun to move."³³¹

His words were not received everywhere in Britain as a satisfactory account of the international situation. While most opinion agreed that it was prudent not to shout at the time, yet opinion hoped that the Government would whisper some very earnest and determined words to the sources causing the tension. Many observers felt that Neville Chamberlain would have pleased more opinion if he had told the House and the country, in an unprovocative language, how and why the "snow" was so "perilously poised" for it appeared that opinion by this time resented being left in the dark.³³²

A few days later, Mr. Eden put forward some proposals which, as the Opposition charged, while improving the supervision of non-intervention, only met the German and Italian demands to the extent that belligerent rights would be accorded to Franco once the Committee had decided that the withdrawal of volunteers from both contending sides in Spain had in fact made substantial progress.³³³

OPINION SPLIT ON BELLIGERENT RIGHTS

Labor Party spokesmen compared these proposals to the Hoare-Laval deal and while their motion of censure was defeated on the issue, Mr. Maxton expressed opposition with

... I see in these proposals an increasing blatancy and impertinence on the part of the Fascist Powers in Europe, and an increased tendency on the part of the British Government to try to conciliate them.³³⁴

And Mr. Morrison called it bluntly another betrayal.³³⁵

Strangely enough, the Liberal Opposition came out in support of the Government on this issue. While Sir Arthur Sinclair spoke highly of the proposals,³³⁶ the *News Chronicle* noted that.

... It is not in the nature of compromises to arouse enthusiasm. But it was recognised that the present effort stood a better chance of acceptance than any other that could be devised.³³⁷

³³¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 326, July 13, 1937, col. 989. The German Ambassador in Britain noted that England desired peace, as did France, and that in spite of the sharp line followed, neither of the two countries would push things to the limit if it meant war. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 376.

³³² Wickham Steed, "The Poised Snow," *The Spectator*, July 16, 1937, pp. 95-6.

³³³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 326, July 12, 1937, col. 834-5; July 15, 1937, col. 1593-9. See also "A Last Attempt," *The Spectator*, July 16, 1937, pp. 93-4; "Notes," *The Economist*, July 17, 1937, pp. 113-4, and *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 378 and 379.

³³⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 15, 1937, col. 1612-3.

³³⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 15, 1937, col. 1632.

³³⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 15, 1937, col. 1602-3.

³³⁷ *News Chronicle*, July 15, 1937.

While Mr. Eden was answering the Opposition with the words that "a war postponed may be a war averted,"³³⁸ Mr. Churchill expressed an important point held by opinion.

. . . I have no hesitation in saying that the fact that the Powers should remain together is of greater consequence to the peace of Europe than the actual merits of any agreement which keeps them together.³³⁹

Opinion was still divided a week later when the issue of the guns then being mounted by the Franco forces on the heights overlooking Gibraltar arose in the House. Not only the Labor Party took issue to this, but the Churchill element of the Conservative Party was highly critical as well.³⁴⁰

In the summer adjournment debate in the House, opinion was far from pleased with the international situation or with the Government's policy. Mr. Dalton recited the Government's failures since 1931 in foreign affairs,³⁴¹ and Lloyd George and Mr. Noel-Baker continued to severely censure the Government for all its errors in foreign policy since 1931.³⁴²

Harold Nicolson, still with the Government side, gave his opinion that Mr. Eden was the only man who could keep alive the slender hope of peace.³⁴³ Duff Cooper charged that not one person outside the Labor Party believed that the Spanish war was worth a war to Britain.³⁴⁴

Lord Cranborne, who had not yet broken from the Government ranks, stated that,

. . . In our private lives and in our foreign policy, the aim is to drive carefully and to make allowance for the other driver. It is not so spectacular, but we are more likely to arrive at our destination . . .³⁴⁵

With the end of the Parliamentary session late in July, 1937, the Government's policy appeared to be acceptable to the greater part of British opinion. With the Government winning by-election after by-election on the policy of appeasement, the Conservative hold on the reins of office appeared stronger than at any time since 1931. But opinion was firm on the need at the time for protection of British shipping and the danger of allowing guns to be mounted within range of Gibraltar. And there was no mistaking the

³³⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 326, July 15, 1937, col 1599. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 376.

³³⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1606-9. Typical of many who sooner or later saw the inherent dangers of appeasement was the shift made by the Duchess of Atholl. While in the previous Parliament's she had been a stern Tory, busy only with exposing Bolshevik tyranny, she became after 1935, a fierce antagonist of Fascism and an apostle of full collective security. H of C., *Ibid.*, July 19, 1937, col. 1900-5. See also "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, July 23, 1937, p. 129.

³⁴⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 13, 1937, col. 1024-6; July 19, 1937, col. 129.

³⁴¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 19, 1937, col. 1811-28.

³⁴² H of C., *Ibid.*, July 19, 1937, col. 1856-63; col. 1905-15.

³⁴³ H of C., *Ibid.*, July 19, 1937, col. 1889-94.

³⁴⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.* V. 326, July 19, 1937, col. 2571-8.

³⁴⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1924-5. The Germans showed concern at this time over Britain's apparent overtures to Franco. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 391.

fact that the temper of opinion had strengthened against the dictators during the Parliamentary session just ended.³⁴⁶

Again, it was noted that had the Opposition been able to present an alternative policy and acceptable leaders who could have captured public confidence, the position of Neville Chamberlain's party would have been more doubtful.³⁴⁷

THE NYON CONFERENCE AND OPINION

Neville Chamberlain's personal gesture in sending Mussolini a letter in August was hailed by most of the press and opinion in Britain. *The Christain World*, *The Spectator* and even the usually hostile *Economist* thought that nothing but good would come of the letter. *The Spectator* noted that "an Anglo-Italian detente would be for the benefit of all Europe."³⁴⁸ However, the later Italian action in the torpedo incident against the British ship "Havock" wiped out most of the good feeling between the two countries in this period.³⁴⁹

The Nyon Conference itself was hailed by most of the press in Britain. The purpose of the conference was to reach agreement that would eliminate the open piracy then prevalent in the Western Mediterranean.³⁵⁰

Parallel with the negotiations at Nyon, a new controversy arose over the functions of the League, which helped indicate popular feeling on appeasement. *The Times*, for example, after carrying letters by Lord Cecil, Lord Lothian and others on League functions, finally stated that the League had been valued too much as a League of coercion and prevention, too little as a League of conciliation.³⁵¹ This aroused pro-League opinion in Britain. *The Spectator* summed it up with

... History lends no warrant for this suggestion. In both the Manchurian and Abyssinian affairs, conciliation was carried to the limit.³⁵²

³⁴⁶ H. of C. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1937, col. 3539-40. See also "Debate on Adjournment," *The Economist*, August 7, 1937, p. 287.

³⁴⁷ "An Impotent Opposition," *The Spectator*, July 30, 1937, pp. 192-3; "An Eventful Session," *The Economist*, July 31, 1937, pp. 225-6.

³⁴⁸ "Ourselves and Italy," *The Spectator*, August 6, 1937, pp. 228-9; "Friendship with Italy," *The Christain World*, August 5, 1937, p. 5; "Holiday Diplomacy," *The Economist*, August 7, 1937, pp. 281-2.

³⁴⁹ "Spain and the Mediterranean," *The Economist*, September 4, 1937, p. 464. Mr. Eden told the German Charge d'Affairs that opinion in England was exceptionally alarmed over this. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 413.

³⁵⁰ A complete report of Nyon and the conditions leading up to it may be found in a speech by Mr. Eden. H. of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 327, October 21, 1937, col. 57-67. See also "Nyon and Geneva," *The Spectator*, September 17, 1937, pp. 448-9; "The Coming Session," *The Economist*, September 25, 1937, p. 603. A summary of the provisions made at Nyon may be found in *Survey of International Affairs*, V. II, 1937, pp. 347-348 and Cmd 5568 and 5569.

³⁵¹ *The Times*, September 14, 1937.

³⁵² "Nyon and Geneva," *The Spectator*, September 17, 1937, pp. 448-9. Some time previously the Annual Report of the National Peace Council had come out strongly in favor of a practical policy for the re-establishment of the effectiveness of the League and the creation of conditions of peace. "The March of Events," *The Christain World*, August 5, 1937, p. 2.

During the month that followed the conference, opinion was concerned over whether or not Germany and Italy would come into the plan. While opinion in Britain agreed that the idea of the door always being open for friendly discussions with Germany, it was generally agreed that the situation was the most delicate since 1918.³⁵³

Meanwhile, a section of the press once again became very critical of the Government's conduct toward the Italians. For example, the *Herald* carried headlines of "Eden Runs Away from Mussolini,"³⁵⁴ while the *News Chronicle* refereed to the matter as "a rather naive Anglo-French effort to avoid the admission that the Duce has had much the same effect on them as a stoat has on a weasel."³⁵⁵

By late October, Colonel Wedgwood was almost alone in expressing the opinion that,

... What happens in Spain affects the whole world. If the dictators win this time, the clock is set for Czechoslovakia to follow suit, and the clock may even be set for France to fall.³⁵⁶

And on the other hand, Lloyd George, who was still bitterly attacking the Government's policy, was attacked in turn for endangering the delicate talks.³⁵⁷

Mr. Attlee, while agreeing with the purpose of the Nyon Conference, pledged his party never to support the foreign policy followed by Britain during the previous five years.³⁵⁸ And Sir Archibald Sinclair saw some hope for the easement of European tension in the Nyon proposals, but was critical of the Government for not supporting the League as fully as possible during the previous years.³⁵⁹

By the end of October, everyone in the House of Commons was hurling charges at Mr. Eden. While Mr. Noel-Baker proved that Mr. Eden was destroying the League,³⁶⁰ Lloyd George proved that Mr. Eden was helping

³⁵³ "Cabinet and the Crisis," *The Spectator*, October 15, 1937, pp. 620-2. **Documents on German Foreign Policy**, V. III, No. 412.

³⁵⁴ *Daily Herald*, October 16, 1937.

³⁵⁵ *News Chronicle*, October 17, 1937. See also "Italy's Last Minute Offer," *The Economist*, October 23, 1937, pp. 149-50; "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, October 22, 1937, p. 674.

³⁵⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 327, October 21, 1937, col. 101.

³⁵⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 327, October 21, 1937, col. 131-5. See also "Non-Intervention," *The Christain World*, October 21, 1937, p. 10; "The Struggle for Non-Intervention," *The Spectator*, October 28, 1937, p. 10.

³⁵⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 67-77. There were these considerations which governed the bewildering uncertainty of the Labor leaders in such matters as rearmament and neutrality in the Spanish war. They themselves knew that in the face of a rearmed Germany some measures of rearmament on Britain's part were absolutely necessary and they knew that intervention on the side of the Spanish Government would provoke immediate and more effective German and Italian intervention for Franco. Yet the rank and file of the Labor Party still feared that Britain's new arms might one day be used against Russia or on the side of Italy and they believed that it was the duty of all British workers to assist their comrades in Spain even at the risk of provoking counter-intervention and possibly a world war. Harold Nicolson, "British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. I, February 1937, pp. 53-63.

³⁵⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, October 27, 1937, col. 77-89.

³⁶⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 328, October 28, 1937, col. 543-4.

General Franco,³⁶¹ Herbert Morrison proved that Mr. Eden was class conscious,³⁶² and Hugh Dalton finished the debate which centered around Anthony Eden by showing that the Foreign Secretary was throwing away the Empire.³⁶³

Under this barrage of criticism, some of the Government supporters appeared to be a little less confident about their foreign policy than they had been before the debate opened. However, Mr. Eden, on the first day of November, was able to effectively answer most of the charges made by the opposition. For example, he noted the fact that the League could not have acted on the Spanish issue when two nations in the League had voted against any League action in the problem. On the whole, it appeared that Mr. Eden's excellent defense against all charges went a long way in reassuring public opinion in Britain.³⁶⁴

Observers at the time generally believed that it was a tactical error for Labor to attack so hard the decision of the Government to send British commercial agents to those Spanish territories which were under Franco's control. There appeared to be no special reason why the dispatch of such agents should have led to the granting of belligerent rights or diplomatic recognition as the Opposition in the House charged would happen.³⁶⁵

But opinion was quick to note Mr. Eden's blunder in the House when he accused the Opposition of "wishing we were fighting now." Many Members believed that the debates on foreign policy would have been much better and more valuable if the respective parties had ceased accusing each other of wanting war. The fact remained that British opinion favored any party and any policy that stood the best chance of keeping the country out of war. It is interesting to note that what the Conservatives accused the Opposition of wanting what they themselves only two years earlier had stood for or stated they stood for, namely, the Covenant and the strict enforcement of international law.³⁶⁶

It would be well to remember that during this period and to an every increasing extent as war approached, both factions in Europe were keenly interested in the attitude of the United States for obvious reasons and that while American foreign policy did not determine political events in Europe,

³⁶¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 556-8.

³⁶² H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 571-3.

³⁶³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 604-7. For example, Mr. Eden, unknown to Parliament, had approached the Germans regarding Italian intentions in the Balearic Islands. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 457.

³⁶⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 329, November 1, 1937, col. 1102-3. The German Embassy noted that the reception of his speech in the larger British papers was favorable, almost without exception. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 16. See also "Germany and Peace," *The Spectator*, November 5, 1937, p. 787. Interestingly enough, *The Economist*, usually an accurate judge of opinion noted here that the Government's prestige war itell very high and that if a General Election had been called on the issues then before the people, the Government would have won at least a many seats as in 1935. "Trade and Politics," *The Economist*, October 23, 1937, pp. 150-1.

³⁶⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, November 9, 1937, col. 1605-6. One publication noted that this was regarded as a favor to Franco by both sides in Britain. "Agents at Salamanca," *The Economist*, November 13, 1937, pp. 304-5.

³⁶⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 328, November 1, 1937, col. 1105-6.

such events were definitely influenced to a certain extent by United States foreign policy.

It is of interest to note that President Roosevelt's address at Chicago on October 5, 1937, was generally regarded as having marked an important departure in American policy. In suggesting a "quarantine" against powers threatening and disturbing the peace of the world, the American President for the first time during his administration advanced a positive program in foreign affairs.

On the other hand, the violently negative reaction of the American public to Mr. Roosevelt's suggestion furnished the best possible proof to the contending European powers of the unwillingness of the American people to consider any degree of involvement in world affairs or any measure of participation with other nations in preventing the spread of conflicts. The significance of the American attitude requires no particular emphasis in view of the fact that by then Mussolini had devoured Ethiopia, Hitler had reoccupied the Rhineland, Italy, Germany and Soviet Russia were actively intervening in the Spanish Civil War, and the Japanese armies were invading China. The spread of aggression was alarming, yet the American people refused to entertain any proposals for action with other nations to check the rapid deterioration of the international situation.

NEW OVERTURES TO GERMANY

With the announced policies of Neville Chamberlain in mind, the British Government during November, 1937, took steps to implement those policies by sending Lord Halifax to Berlin and Berchtesgaden. His immediate task was to get a clearer picture of the problems involved. Such problems, in the German view, had to be solved if Europe was to arrive at a condition of affairs "in which nations might look at one another with a desire to cooperate instead of regarding each other with suspicion and resentment."³⁶⁷ Mr. Chamberlain told the House that Lord Halifax's ultimate aim as well as the Government's was to achieve

. . . a general settlement, to arrive at a position where reasonable grievances may be removed, where suspicions may again be restored. That obviously postulates that all those who take part in such an effort must make their contribution towards a common end.³⁶⁸

Generally speaking, the greater part of British opinion appeared to favor the British representative's trip as indicated by the reception the announcement received in the press. Some papers, because they featured

³⁶⁷ "Lord Halifax and Germany," *The Times*, November 4, 1937. Hitler had revealed to his military chiefs on November 5th, his plans for future military conquests in Eastern Europe. Neither Baron Von Neurath nor General Blomberg had agreed with Hitler's views. It was not, therefore, a coincidence, that the purge of February 4th, two months later, included these dissenters. Seabury, *The Wilhelmstrasse*, pp. 44-5.

³⁶⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 330, December 21, 1937, col. 1804-5. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. 1, No. 29.

leading articles to the effect that the trip would only bring about more appeasement, were accused by the remainder of the press of endangering the success of Lord Halifax's mission.³⁶⁹ There was a great deal of guessing over the trip and rumors were numerous.³⁷⁰

On November 24, in the lower House, Prime Minister Chamberlain made a statement which had been eagerly awaited by opinion. In his speech, he made it clear that Lord Halifax's trip had been valuable in advancing a desire for closer understanding with Germany.³⁷¹ Mr. Eden went to great lengths in denying that the German Foreign Minister, Baron von Neurath, was to visit England for the conclusion of a deal.³⁷² For the time being, those people that had believed that a crude bargain over the trip and rumors were numerous.³⁷⁰

In spite of the Government's assurances that nothing had been given away, opinion remained uneasy on the question. But a week later some of the uneasiness was removed by the Government's announcement of a complete identity of view with the French. Coming at the time it did, this announcement appeared to have more substance to it than was usual in the case and opinion lent it more weight.³⁷³

The closing debate of the year, though bitter, did not add materially to the knowledge of opinion nor did it offer satisfaction to opinion.³⁷⁴ The most important speech was that of Mr. Churchill when he indicated general support for the Government and paid a warm tribute to Mr. Eden for his part in the non-intervention measures in Spain. Winston Churchill then concluded his speech with a convincing and wholehearted declaration of faith in the League of Nations, even in its existing state. No one on either side was able to make a more convincing statement in support of League.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, November 19, 1937, p. 878.

³⁷⁰ Hitler Ready for Truce," *Evening Standard*, November 13, 1937; *The Times*, November 15, 1937; *Daily Herald*, November 13, 1937; see also report of the German Minister in Ireland. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 31.

³⁷¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 329, November 24, 1937, col. 991-2. For the German version, see the Inclosure in *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 31.

³⁷² H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 1022-3. See also "The Open Door," *The Spectator*, November 26, 1937, pp. 938-9. M. Poncet noted that during the Nuremberg Trials, Ribbentrop testified that Lord Halifax had led Hitler to believe that Britain would not oppose the annexation of Austria by Germany. Francois-Poncet, *The Fateful Years*, p. 179. The German version quoted Lord Halifax as stating that in reference to Austria, England desired peaceful evolution. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 31.

³⁷³ "An Anglo-French Policy," *The Spectator*, December 3, 1937, pp. 982-3, and *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 48.

³⁷⁴ H of C., *op. cit.*, V. 330, December 21, 1937, col. 1834-5.

³⁷⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 330, December 21, 1937, col. 1823. It was noted that opinion varied toward Germany in this debate but that there was an almost unanimous resentment against the methods utilized by Italy. "Notes," *The Economist*, December 25, 1937, pp. 631-2. The German Embassy noted at the turn of the year that politics had been taken out of the non-intervention committee to a great extent with the result that interest by British opinion in it decreased greatly. Apparently the main point of contention, whether or not the volunteers were to be withdrawn, was no longer considered a vital question, even in England, but the main problem was whether Italy would establish herself permanently in Majorca or even on the Spanish mainland. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 506.

The Government's policy of non-intervention and sustained attempts to relax European tension through the establishment of more normal relations with Germany unquestionably represented the predominant view of both the country and the House. The majority of the people believed that the Government's policy had been instrumental in preserving the peace of Europe through a most critical year.³⁷⁶

It was noted that the Government always appeared to take a weaker attitude than was in fact the case and the gap between the two front benches of the House was in reality not nearly so wide as it appeared. Mr. Eden made a significant statement, one which would separate him from the Government ranks a few months later. He asserted that Britain was "not seeking a solution of European difficulties at the expense of other Powers."³⁷⁷

Thus the political outlook on the domestic side changed little during 1937. While the Chamberlain Government had not yet met its real test, the ruling party apparently remained as strong as it had been a year previously and opinion for the most part continued to have faith in the policies carried out by that administration. On the other hand, opinion at the end of 1937 saw that the old order of the League of Nations had virtually disappeared and all Europe looked with deep apprehension for the New Order succeeding it and asked the question: Would it be formed by the Berlin-Rome combination or the London-Paris group?

³⁷⁶ "Foreign Affairs Debate," *The Spectator*, December 24, 1937, p. 1132. In this regard, see the report of the German Ambassador in London. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I. No. 39.

³⁷⁷ H of C., *op. cit.*, col. 1939. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, December 24, 1937, p. 1132. Interestingly enough, Dr. Weizsacker made a report of a conversation with Prentiss Gilbert, Counselor of the American Embassy in Berlin in which Mr. Gilbert, just returned from London, noted that the British Cabinet was split over the manner of continuing the Lord Halifax conversations, one faction led by Mr. Eden, the other by Sir Samuel Hoare. Mr. Gilbert went on to warn Dr. Weizsacker that British opinion would have to be handled carefully because for years that opinion had been nourished on the League of Nations ideology. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 79.

PART II

FULL APPEASEMENT

CHAPTER V

THE ANGLO-ITALIAN AGREEMENT OF 1938

While British opinion was more or less condoning the treaty infractions of Germany at this time, the path of appeasement toward Italy was not so readily accepted by the British people.¹

When in February of 1938, Count Grandi informed Mr. Eden that Italy was ready to open discussions covering all points of controversy between Italy and Britain, Neville Chamberlain felt that the offer should be accepted.² The Prime Minister, in keeping with his announced policy of appeasement, favored Mussolini's gesture because it would not only be an opportunity to separate Italy from the Axis partnership, but would also be beneficial in removing some of the causes of unrest in Europe.³

The British press immediately began speculation over the possible terms of an agreement with Italy. Lord Halifax opened the question in the House of Lords when he stated that efforts were being made to reach an agreement with Italy on the outstanding differences between the two countries.⁴

At about the same time, Mr. Eden, in a speech at Birmingham, endeavored to answer press speculation on the terms of such an accord with these words,

In any agreement we make today there must be no sacrifice of principles and no shirking of responsibilities merely to obtain quick results. It is not by seeking to buy temporary goodwill that peace is made, but on a basis of frank reciprocity with mutual respect.⁵

Mr. Churchill was of the opinion that Mr. Eden's words represented the greater part of opinion in the country as well as in the House of Commons and that everyone desired good relations with Italy.⁶

¹ In this regard, Mr. Chamberlain, soon after the Halifax conversations, told Rippentrop that sentiment in Parliament and hence British policy was favorable toward a settlement with Germany. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I. Nos. 81 and 86.

² *The Times*, February 12, 1938.

³ *Manchester Guardian*, February 29, 1938.

⁴ *H of L, Parl. Deb.*, V. 107, February 12, 1938, col. 711.

⁵ *The Times*, February 13, 1938. *The Economist* strongly supported these views but regretted at the same time that the Government as a whole could not apply these principles. "Topics of the Week," *The Economist*, February 19, 1938, p. 382.

⁶ That Mr. Churchill was mistaken in this aspect was indicated by later events, although party loyalty might have sustained Mr. Chamberlain in this issue. Winston Churchill, "It is Not All Over Yet," *Step by Step*, pp. 214-7.

However, *The Economist* voiced a not uncommon thought when it noted that the British people had to recognise that the political and moral disaster of Italy's triumphant aggression was an accomplished fact and therefore, an agreement might prevent a bad situation from becoming worse.⁷

THE RESIGNATION OF MR. EDEN

Mr. Eden shared Neville Chamberlain's views with one qualification which suddenly and unexpectedly divided the Cabinet.⁸ There had been reports in several London papers on February 12th of a Cabinet crisis arising out of the differences between the two men.⁹ No one within the Government would admit at the time that there were differences. Mr. Chamberlain told the *Sunday Times* that there was "not a word truth in the story," while Mr. Eden gave an unqualified denial of the story to the *Daily Telegraph*.¹⁰

An emergency meeting of the Cabinet was held on February 19th. Mr. Chamberlain, who wished to enter immediately upon negotiations with Italy, was opposed by Mr. Eden, who felt that such discussions should not begin until Mussolini had withdrawn a substantial number of his troops from Spain. The Prime Minister believed that he was meeting Mr. Eden's view by noting that the agreement would not become effective until most of the Italian troops had been withdrawn. Since Anthony Eden did not change his view, his resignation along with that of Lord Cranborne, was announced.¹¹

The following day, the Italian Government gave an assurance to Britain that it accepted the British view concerning the withdrawal of foreign volunteers from Spain and the granting of belligerents to both sides in the Spanish war.¹² However, Mr. Eden made it clear that the earlier receipt of this news from Italy would not have changed his mind. He explained to the House that the attitude of the Italian Government toward international problems and toward Britain in particular, did not justify Britain entering

⁷ "A Bare Promise," *The Economist*, January 9, 1938, p. 49; see also "Chamberlain or Eden," *The Spectator*, V. 160, 1938, pp. 160-1.

⁸ "March of Events," *The Christian World*, February 17, 1938, p. 2. Keith Feiling includes a good account of the differences which arose between the two men including the split over President Roosevelt's suggestions for a world conference in January, 1938. Keith Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain* (1946), pp. 327-8. See also Georges Bonnet, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, pp. 78-9.

⁹ There had been rumors of a difference between the two men late in 1937, but such rumors were discounted by observers at that time. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 329, December 21, 1937, col. 1804-5. Press reports had appeared even before this or at the time of Lord Halifax's return from Germany in November, 1937. See "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, November 19, 1937, p. 878.

¹⁰ *Sunday Times*, February 13, 1938; *Daily Telegraph*, February 13, 1938. Mr. Eden, in a speech at Birmingham, had also denied press reports of a divided Cabinet.

¹¹ *The Times*, February 20, 1938. *The Times* quoted the Government as stating that "The Chancellor of the Exchequer then informed his colleagues that Eden had felt the strain of recent events and that he was far from well," while the *Telegraph* reported that "Mr. Eden told me, 'I have never been in better health.'" *The Times*, February 22, 1938; *Daily Telegraph*, February 22, 1938. Strangely enough, the same day that Hitler bitterly attacked Mr. Eden, Eden's resignation was announced. John Mackintosh, *The Paths that Led to War* (1940), p. 330. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 533.

¹² *The Times*, February 23, 1938.

into the proposed negotiations. He stated that Mr. Chamberlain and his advisers had taken another view and that if they were right, their policy would be more sure of success with a Foreign Secretary who sincerely believed in the Government's policy. While explaining that it was not only differences over Italian policy, he noted that,

. . . Within the last few weeks, upon one most important decision of foreign policy, which did not concern Italy at all, the difference was fundamental. Moreover, it has recently become clear to me, and I think to him, that there is between us a real difference of outlook and method.¹³

He concluded that he could no longer condone a policy which allowed opinion at home and abroad to believe that Britain was prepared to yield to constant pressure.¹⁴

Mr. Chamberlain, who followed Mr. Eden, stated that the issue was one in which,

. . . I was convinced that a rebuff to the Italian expression of their desire that conversations should start at once would be taken by them as a confirmation of those suspicions . . . that we had never really been in earnest about the conversations . . .

And while denying the Opposition charge that the terms of the agreement were already made prior to the public announcement of the conversations, he concluded with,

. . . The peace of Europe must depend upon the attitude of the four major Powers-Germany, Italy, France and Britain . . . The question that we have to think of is this: Are we to allow these two pairs of nations to go on glowering at one another across the frontier, allowing the feeling between the two sides to become more and more embittered until at last . . . conflict begins? Or can we bring them to an understanding of one another's aims and objects and to such discussion as may lead to a final settlement.¹⁵

He concluded his remarks in the House with the thought that if Britain could get the discussions under way, the peace of Europe would be saved for a generation.¹⁶

¹³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 332, February 21, 1938, col. 49. Regarding differences over President Roosevelt's proposal, see Sumner Welles, *Time for Decision* (1944), p. 64-7, and Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 251.

¹⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 50. Undersecretary Cranborne called it "surrender to blackmail," H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 244. See also "Eden's Surrender," *The Christain World*, February 24, 1938, p. 10. The German Ambassador to France reported at this time that France felt very hard hit by Mr. Eden's departure and by Neville Chamberlain's initiative toward Italy, which the French generally interpreted as a change in foreign policy. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 125. That the Italians were well aware of Mr. Eden's stand and feared the consequences of Eden ever heading the Government in Britain is evident in *Ciano's Hidden Diary*, pp. 69, 77-8.

¹⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 332, February 21, 1938, col. 64.

¹⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 65. One press editorial suggested that the Tory Right Wing, well aware of the Duce's difficulties, had prepared to succour him, lest a Government of the Left should take his place and the editor concluded that this was the motive of the Government's action. "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, February 26, 1938, pp. 316-7.

OPINION DIVIDED OVER MR. EDEN

In the preceding year and a half, the line of demarcation between parties in Britain and opinion had become more and more blurred. There had been no real cleavage of opinion, but with the resignation of Mr. Eden, the whole picture changed. The question which clearly separated opinion was namely what the attitude of Britain should be toward the totalitarian Powers.¹⁷

Thus it was the Labor Opposition in the House which violently attacked Mr. Chamberlain, charging him with a degrading complaisance towards the dictators. Mr. Attlee's terms for it were "whining to Mussolini" and "surrender to dictatorship."¹⁸ Mr. Griffiths called it "a definite lining up beside the Fascist Powers."¹⁹ The following day, Mr. Arthur Greenwood, who had moved a motion of censure on the Government, stated that inasmuch as the dictators had demanded Mr. Eden's resignation, they would be consulted about the appointment of his successor.²⁰

Both Mr. Churchill and Lloyd George supported Anthony Eden in the resignation issue. Winston Churchill stated that,

... I feel personally, as an elder man, the poignancy of his loss because he seems to be the one fresh figure of the first magnitude arising out of the generation which was ravaged by the war.²¹

Lloyd George struck at the center of the Government's case when he asked whether Mr. Chamberlain would have acted and talked in the same way about peace and the inexpediency of demanding guarantees, if the aggressor power had not been Italy but Russia.²² Other Conservatives who supported the Foreign Secretary were Major Halls, General Spears, and Mr. Cartland, which indicated the depth of popular feeling for Mr. Eden's action.²³

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of Eden's resignation and its effect on British policy, see *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 127. Mr. Zilliacus rightly asserted that Mr. Eden made speeches expressing his own very creditable sentiments on the League, peace, etc., which opinion took to represent what the Government was doing or wanted to do, whereas in fact his words never bore any relation to the Government's policy. *Zilliacus, Between Two Wars* (1939), p. 150. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, February 25, 1938, p. 299, and Galeazzo Ciano, *L'Europe verso la catastrofe* (Verone, 1948), pp. 249 ff. The subject is discussed also in Ciano, 1937-38 *Diario*, p. 116.

¹⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 332, February 21, 1938, col. 123.

¹⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 267. See also "A London Diary," by Critic, *The New Statesman and Nation*, February 26, 1938, pp. 318-9.

²⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, February 22, 1938, col. 854. The Labor Party and the Trades Union Council went so far as to demand a new Government on the issue. "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, February 26, 1938, p. 313.

²¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 780. Mr. Churchill wrote at the time that recent events had greatly weakened the Conservative Party and that if a General Election were held, the Government would be defeated. W. Churchill, "Carry On," *Step by Step*, p. 219. This opinion was also voiced in "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, April 1, 1938, p. 571.

²² H of C., *Ibid.*, February 21, 1938, col. 114. See also "A London Diary," by Critic, *The New Statesman and Nation*, February 26, 1938, pp. 318-9. The German Embassy noted that this also was a vital difference between the two men, with Mr. Eden strongly supporting a European Council of Nations which would include Russia, while Mr. Chamberlain was anything but warm on this subject. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I No. 127.

²³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 322, February 22, 1938, col. 88, 109, 211. See also "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, March 4, 1938, pp. 351-2.

In the House of Lords, the Labor Opposition was well led by Lord Snell. Late in February, he made some caustic observations on Mr. Chamberlain's declaration that the British Government "place full reliance upon the intentions of the Italian Government to make good their assurances." This simple faith, Lord Snell believed, was very impressive, but he hoped that it was not of the kind that enabled the Government to believe what it knew was not true.²⁴

THE PRIME MINISTER RETREATS BEFORE OPINION

Mr. Chamberlain, sensing the tide of opinion on the issue, stated in the House a few days later that,

. . . Although we shall not cease our efforts for an appeasement of the position, we ought to make it known that our desires for peace do not signify a willingness to purchase peace today at the price of peace hereafter.²⁵

This was his answer to accusations of pusillanimity hurled at him and his colleagues from hundreds of platforms during the height of the crisis. His stand represented a change from the replies given by Mr. Chamberlain to Mr. Eden and the Labor critics a few days earlier when he sounded as if he were adopting the maxim of "peace at almost any price."²⁶

But the Government's decision did not involve a change of policy for negotiations with Italy had been agreed upon in the previous summer and would have begun in the previous September except that particular events did not permit them to be opened at that time. Italy, for the second time, suggested discussions, and had this offer been refused by Britain, it would have represented a change in policy by Britain.²⁷

Yet this crisis was the beginning of a change which intensified and widened the Opposition to the Government.²⁸ Mr. Eden's resignation had an importance out of all proportion to the differences with his colleagues that had brought it about. From that time on, the controversy was more embittered. This was in no way encouraged or planned by Mr. Eden himself. Labor leaders who had formerly attacked him while he was with the Government, hailed him as a martyr after he resigned.

The effect of Mr. Eden's resignation on opinion was not easy to measure.²⁹ However, with Parliamentary members spending many of their weekends

²⁴ H of L, *Ibid.*, V, 107, February 28, 1938, col. 687.

²⁵ H of C., *op. cit.*, February 29, 1938, col. 805. See also "A Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, March 4, 1938, pp. 348-9.

²⁶ "After the Crisis," *The Spectator*, March 4, 1938, p. 348, and "March of Events," *The Christain World*, February 24, 1938, p. 2.

²⁷ Official documents are found in Cmd 5726. The German Ambassador in Italy reported that Britain's action in concluding the agreement was that there was no room in the immediate future for any further Italian expansion, at least expansion at the expense of Britain or of British interests. *Document on German Foreign Policy*, V, I, No. 755.

²⁸ "Foreign Policy," *The Christain World*, March 3, 1938, p. 10; Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs*, V, I, Part II, p. 43.

²⁹ It was found that when Mr. Eden resigned, politics, which normally was one-half of one percent of all ordinary conversation, rose to three percent or a six hundred percent increase. S. C. Leslie. "How the Public Thinks," *The Spectator*, April 22, 1938, p. 704.

among their constituents the mood of the House was probably a fair reflection. There was ample evidence of wide spread party and non-party support for Mr. Eden.³⁰

Initially, there was little change in the alignment of the press. Of the London daily press, *The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Express*, *Mail* and *Sunday* continued to support the Government, while the *News Chronicle* and *Herald* backed the Opposition as they had done prior to this incident. Only the *Mirror* broke away from the Government and joined the ranks of the opposite side.³¹ In the country, only the *Yorkshire Post* broke from the Government's ranks and joined Mr. Eden.³² Most of the other important provincial papers consistently defended the foreign policy then being followed by Neville Chamberlain.³³

Thus by the early part of March, a majority of Britains had once again swung back into Mr. Chamberlain's group of supporters. M. Poncelet, a keen judge of political trends, wrote then that Neville Chamberlain's act was interpreted in Britain and in the world as an indication that the "conciliators" had the upper hand for the moment. This was substantiated by the fact that Mr. Eden was succeeded by Lord Halifax who had paid Hitler a visit in the previous year and who, from his contacts with leading Nazis, never retained the impression that to compromise with the aggressors was vain.³⁴

While the split led to a general revulsion of feeling against the Government, it did not endanger the Government's position after the first shock had passed away. There had been no revolt within the Tory ranks comparable to that which followed the Hoare-Laval proposals.³⁵ Yet another publication noted that while no regular supporters backed Mr. Eden, the cinema audiences cheered him in the news pictures and this indicated some popular support for the former Foreign Secretary.³⁶

However, the public was not misled by Mr. Chamberlain. He frankly stated what his policy was to be in the future. For example, early in April, 1938, he told a Birmingham crowd that,

³⁰ "Comments." *The Statesman and Nation*, February 26, 1938, p. 313. A poll taken soon after Mr. Eden resigned found that seventy-one percent believed he was right, while sixty-nine percent agreed with his reasons for resigning and only twenty-six percent favored the Prime Minister's foreign policy. "British Institute of Public Opinion." *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V, 4, March 1940, pp. 77-82. Count Ciano noted that Mr. Chamberlain's position was not strong and that Italy could not afford to create new difficulties for him. Count Ciano, *Ciano's Hidden Diary, 1937-38*, pp. 91, 92 and 97-8.

³¹ *Evening Standard*, published one of Low's greatest cartoons at that time. It was a biblical allusion to Pilate and showed Mussolini standing sated with the blood of Spain and Abyssinia while Mr. Chamberlain washed his hands in the Mediterranean. The caption was simply "He took water washed his hands." *Evening Standard*, March 1, 1938; *Daily Mirror*, February 28, 1938.

³² *Yorkshire Post*, March 2, 1938.

³³ Mr. H. N. Brailsford in a typical Leftist statement, asserted that the Italian agreement would have only pleased those who welcomed peace at any price while the progressive half of British opinion was filled with anger and shame and he added that the Government wanted Mussolini to remain at the head of the Italian Government. "Tory Policy of Peace." *Political Quarterly*, July-September, 1938, pp. 325-33.

³⁴ Francis Poncelet, *Fateful Years* (1942), p. 285. See also Bonnet, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, p. 142.

³⁵ "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, V, 15, March 5, 1939, p. 353.

³⁶ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, March 4, 1938, p. 350.

. . . We pass no judgment here upon the political system of other countries, but neither Fascism nor Communism is in harmony with our temper and creed . . . There must be something in common between us if only we can find it, and perhaps by our very aloofness from the rest of Europe we may have some special part to play as conciliator and mediator . . .³⁷

THE AGREEMENT AND OPINION

Negotiations with the Italian Government begun without delay after the Eden controversy had settled down. The British Government, while concluding the Agreement on April 16th insisted on the condition that it was not to come into effect until there had been a substantial withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain. When this condition failed to materialize and the Agreement did not come into force, the Italians could not hide their disappointment.³⁸

It would be well to note another factor involved here. Britain was endeavoring at the time to gain American support for British policy. But in spite of American statements to the contrary, the British continued in the attempt to associate the United States with this appeasement policy. On April 14, 1938, Lord Halifax sent a message to Washington announcing the forthcoming Italian Agreement and he asked the American President for a public statement approving the agreement. Needless to say, there was no enthusiasm in Washington for the British request and the official United States Government press statement noted that

It (United States) does not attempt to pass upon the political features of accords such as that recently reached between Great Britain and Italy, but this Government has seen the conclusion of an agreement with sympathetic interest because it is proof of the value of peaceful negotiations.³⁹

Meanwhile, the reception of the Agreement by the British press was entirely as might have been expected. While the *Mail* and *Express* heaped the highest praise on the Agreement and *The Times* and *Telegraph* gave it solid approval, the *Herald* adopted a partisan attack on the Agreement.⁴⁰

The *Manchester Guardian* gave the Agreement searching criticism and called it a revision to the Old Diplomacy and a return to the principle of Power Politics, judging it as a readjustment of imperialist powers of their Imperial interests at the expense of weak third parties.⁴¹ *The Spectator* and

³⁷ *The Times*, April 10, 1938. See also Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, p. 321.

³⁸ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs*, V. I, 1938, pp. 158-62. See also Cmd 5726. For an interesting account of the Agreement and its effect on European diplomacy, see "The Significance of the Italian Agreement," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 23, 1938, pp. 676-7; "Drift or Endeavor," *The Christian World*, April 7, 1938, p. 10; *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 533.

³⁹ *Documents on American Foreign Policy*, V. I, 276; Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, V. I, pp. 579-80.

⁴⁰ *The Times*, April 19, 1938; *Daily Herald*, April 18, 1938; *Daily Mail*, April 21, 1938; *Express*, April 19, 1938; *Daily Telegraph*, April 19, 1938.

⁴¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, April 18, 1938.

The Christain World, while reserved, both called the Agreement hopeful if it would help settle the Spanish question.⁴²

While opinion therefore was generally favorable, a minority opposed the Agreement. In the early part of May after Mr. Chamberlain had asked the House to approve the Agreement, approval was given over the bitter opposition of this minority group and a hostile amendment submitted by the Opposition.⁴³ The debate in the House brought out the real cleavage between the two groups. The difference at that time lay almost entirely in the contrasting attitude towards the dictators.⁴⁴ After Mr. Chamberlain ended his speech in the House with an unqualified tribute to the achievements of the "new Italy" under the leadership of Mussolini, it was inevitable that such sentiments would produce criticism.⁴⁵

The Government had adopted the policy of letting by-gones be by-gones and, if possible, making friends with the totalitarian states. The Liberal Opposition to this attitude was ably led by Sir Archibald Sinclair and Lloyd George.⁴⁶ The Government denied that they were condoning Italian aggression in Abyssinia.⁴⁷ However, the Government's case was weakened by continuing press reports of new troop arrivals in Spain, although denied by Government supporters.⁴⁸

During March, Franco's ruthless drive on Barcelona and his indiscriminate bombing, not only of that city, but of British ships as well, caused no little part of opinion in Britain to dislike him intensely.⁴⁹ Thus by June, the continued bombing of British ships by Franco caused the British Government some concern because of the effect on opinion in Britain. Public opinion then seemed sympathetic towards the policy of appeasement, yet there was undoubtedly an equally powerful body of opinion who would have backed the Government in any action taken to halt those criminal outrages, particularly against the British flag. It was not a question of "losing

⁴² "The Agreement with Italy," *The Spectator*, April 22, 1938, pp. 696-7; "The Fight for Peace," *The Christian World*, May 26, 1938, p. 10. An authority on public opinion noted specifically in the above cited incident that public opinion had to exert constant effort to ascertain which papers had an official "taint." See Richard Heindel, "British Diplomats and the Press," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. 2, October 1938, pp. 435-61.

⁴³ "The Agreement with Italy," *The Christain World*, April 21, 1938, p. 10.

⁴⁴ It was observed that opinion probably honestly clung to the view that friendly relations with the dictators were fundamentally wrong, but that there was no alternative for peace. "The New Policy," *The Christain World*, May 5, 1938, p. 10.

⁴⁵ "Agreement with Italy," *The Christain World*, April 21, 1938, p. 10.

⁴⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 335, May 2, 1938, col. 515-6.

⁴⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 609. There was at this time a movement for the formation of a Popular Front led by the *Herald*. It was observed that it was a pity that there had been no strong opposition to the Government in the previous few years in view of the fact that the leaders in power could make mistakes and get away with it. "Labor and the Popular Front," *The Spectator*, April 22, 1938, pp. 697-8.

⁴⁸ This was denied by Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 334, April 9 1938, col. 771; H of L., *Ibid.*, V. 108, April 12, 1938, col. 299. It was noted in this regard that these denials were an insult to the country's intelligence and that opinion was aware that the Government was only denying inconvenient facts. "None So Blind," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 2, 1938, p. 549. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, Nos. 512 and 519; *Daily Express*, February 4, 1938 and *The Manchester Guardian*, February 4, 1938, the latter asserting that German volunteers were also arriving in Spain.

⁴⁹ "Horror and Disgust," *The Christain World*, March 24, 1938, p. 10.

patience," but one of showing the world that Britain's people were prepared, if necessary, to take risks in the course of international justice.⁵⁰

Throughout June, there were more bombings of British ships. One publication noted that official British protests Franco appeared to bring on more bombings by the Franco forces.⁵¹ But the members in the House could only ask what kind of action could have been taken that was both prudent and effective.⁵²

In the House on June 21st, Mr. Noel-Baker suggested no more diplomatic contacts with Franco, seizure of rebel assets in Britain and such other measures as were necessary to protect British rights.⁵³ But it was clear to opinion, after Lloyd George had again attacked Mr. Chamberlain, that the Prime Minister could not continue to merely protest and expect it to do any good.⁵⁴

It is interesting to note that the roles of the parties were reversed in this instance. The Conservatives were bent on the preservation of peace, while the Labor and Liberal parties were on the fire for "the honor of the flag." It is to be noted that Viscount Cecil refused the position of Government Whip at that time and he stated that "he did not recall any incident in British history at all comparable," and that the Government's position seemed to him inconsistent with British honor and international morality.⁵⁵

By mid-summer, while *The Statesman* was stating that,

We have, then, to face the fact that the ultimate explanation of British policy is that in both countries reactionary opinion has been blinded to its national interests by its fear of communism . . .⁵⁶

The Christain World held that,

Today every warlike action is a spark flown abroad into a world heaped with high explosive. It is a time when a higher price has got to be paid for peace than ever before and who shall say that it is not worth paying?⁵⁷

These views probably represented, then, the feelings of a greater part of opinion in Britain on those issues.

⁵⁰ It was probably with a sense of the unparalleled difficulty of the task of British statesmen which led the electors of Stafford early in June to give a decisive vote to the Government, in spite of powerful attacks by the Opposition. "Troubled Waters," *The Christain World*, June 16, 1938, p. 12.

⁵¹ "Franco's Bluff," *The New Statesman and Nation*, July 2, 1938, p. 1; "Right to Bomb," *The Spectator*, June 10, 1938, pp. 1044-5.

⁵² "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, June 25, 1938, p. 1049.

⁵³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 337, June 21, 1938, col. 1208.

⁵⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 337, June 21, 1938, col. 1388.

⁵⁵ "PM Under Fire," *The Christian World*, June 30, 1938, p. 10.

⁵⁶ "The Crime of Spain," *The New Statesman and Nation*, July 16, 1938, p. 63.

⁵⁷ "PM Under Fire," *The Christian World*, June 30, 1938, p. 10.

CHAPTER VI

OPINION AND THE ANSCHLUSS

Meanwhile in the early part of 1938, there was an organized attempt by the British press to have Mr. Churchill recalled into the Government. His last speech in the House on Foreign affairs had consisted mainly of an appeal to his party not to discard the League.⁵⁸ It was scarcely disputed that since the abandonment of sanctions in 1936, the Conservative Party had become steadily more hostile to any Continental commitments and in addition, many Conservatives had reverted to an attitude of scornful indifference towards the League.⁵⁹ As one publication noted, the recall of Mr. Churchill would have had great political significance then for it would have definitely marked the defeat of the pro-German element in the British Cabinet.⁶⁰ However, the Government did not invite Mr. Churchill into the Governmental structure and events were moving on to the Austrian crisis.

After the resignation of Mr. Eden, Neville Chamberlain choose Lord Halifax to fill the Foreign Office vacancy.⁶¹ The Opposition accepted this appointment only after the Prime Minister announced that he himself would be responsible for all questions on foreign policy in the House.⁶²

The British Prime Minister and the new Foreign Secretary worked smoothly together and were in complete agreement on the foreign policy to be followed by Britain. Public opinion followed closely the speeches of Lord Halifax because of the fact that the people were becoming more interested in foreign affairs.⁶³

⁵⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 330, December 21, 1937, col. 1846-8. However, by June, 1938, when Mr. Churchill's series of speeches appeared under the title of *Arms and the Covenant*, there was no sign of any "conversion" to League principles although they showed an understanding of the German danger earlier in time and more logical in analysis than that of any other Government supporter.

⁵⁹ In retrospect, the rejection by Mr. Chamberlain of President Roosevelt's world peace conference proposals was harmful. Had he accepted, it might not only have aroused opinion in the world on the imminence of war, but it would also have encouraged the small countries which had become increasingly aware of the lack of leadership in the West and the consequent abandonment of all interest in their affairs.

⁶⁰ "Parliamentary Notes," *The Spectator*, January 7, 1938, p. 3. See also "Versailles to Munich," *Public Politics Pamphlet* 28, pp. 31-3. It is interesting to note that Ribbentrop at that time believed that Mr. Chamberlain had given up all hope for agreement with Germany and was only playing for time and that Britain was trying to appease Italy and Japan in order to weaken Germany's allies. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 93.

⁶¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 322, February 21, 1938, col. 348. The fears of France were also aroused at this time, according to a conversation noted by Baron von Neurath with M. Poncet. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 124.

⁶² H of C., *Ibid.*, February 28, 1938, col. 926.

⁶³ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, March 4, 1938, p. 350.

It would be well to note the attitude of the United States toward this policy. Strangely enough, it was not the December, 1937 incident of the Japanese sinking of the *USS Panay*, but the evolution of the situation in Europe that inspired the American President to resume his earlier plan for a world-wide settlement of problems in January, 1938. Lord Halifax on his recent trip to Germany had told Hitler that Britain was prepared to enlarge and broaden the policy of appeasement in the hope of arriving at a settlement of differences. Under Secretary Welles wrote up a memorandum and among other things noted that if Germany and Italy could solve their problems with Britain and France, then the Axis support of Japan would be considerably weakened, which in turn would force Japan to make peace with China.⁶⁴

From this memorandum, it is plain that Mr. Roosevelt's project, only slightly expanded, was intended to buttress the attempt of Britain to reach an agreement with Germany. Though involving no approval of Britain's policy of appeasement, it certainly implied acceptance of it. Furthermore, in the event of failure of his plan, Mr. Roosevelt thought that it would at least have the moral effect of rallying world opinion to the democracies.

In line with this plan, President Roosevelt outlined his plan by message to Mr. Chamberlain. However, the Prime Minister would have nothing of the American proposal, partly no doubt because he was impressed with the strength of isolationist sentiment in the United States and had convinced himself that the Washington Government could not be counted on for anything beyond mere words, and partly because, in the words of Mr. Churchill, he "was imbued with a sense of a special and personal mission to come to friendly terms with the dictators of Italy and Germany, and he conceived himself capable of achieving this relationship."⁶⁵

While both Mr. Chamberlain and Secretary Welles believed the rejection of this plan by the British Prime Minister brought the second World War that much closer, the question is raised whether in fact it held so much promise. Since the publication of Axis records and documents captured during the war, it has become perfectly clear that the ambitions of the Nazi leaders went far beyond what reasonable statesmen in other countries would have thought possible at the time, and that therefore, the move contemplated by President Roosevelt, like the appeasement efforts of Mr. Chamberlain, would probably have been doomed to failure. Conceivably, a really strong stand by the United States Government in support of the British might have changed the course of later events, but the foregoing conditions should suffice to show that nothing of the kind was even remotely envisaged in Washington. Mr. Roosevelt and his advisers sympathized with Britain and wished them well in whatever efforts they felt constrained to make in the direction of peaceful adjustment, but there was never any question of approving or supporting that specific policy and

⁶⁴ Welles, *The Time for Decision*, p. 66 ff.

⁶⁵ Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, pp. 221, 242; Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 322-25.

certainly no thought of assuming any political or military commitment in connection with it. Under the circumstances Hitler was perfectly safe in discounting the influence of the United States.

Against such a background, negotiations with Germany were resumed following Lord Halifax's appointment. On March 3rd, Hitler had rejected Sir Neville Henderson's suggestions for a peaceful settlement of the Austrian question, in spite of the British offer to wash her hands of the whole affair provided the outcome could be designated as a "reasonable solution reasonably achieved."⁶⁶ It was also true that Mr. Chamberlain in the House in February and March had given what might be justifiably interpreted as a "green light" for the peaceful acquisition of Austria.⁶⁷

British policy, as in the past, was influenced similarly in this instance. In the first place, France was without a Government at the moment and, hence could not have offered any immediate opposition to the German action. Italy was drawing closer and closer to Germany and, as a matter of fact, Mussolini on March 11th had agreed to the Germans to consider Austria as "Immaterial to him." There remained the attitude of Czechoslovakia and on her attitude depended that of France, for had the Czechs mobilized and an incident occurred, France, who would certainly have not fought for Austria, might have been compelled to assist her Prague ally.

The Germans put their finger on the key to the entire situation and carried out the acquisition by assuring the Czechs that Czechoslovakia had nothing to fear from Germany and, in turn, the Nazis obtained from the Prague Government assurances that the Czechs would not mobilize.

The attitude of the British Government immediately prior to the Anschluss, that is that a peaceful acquisition would be acceptable, undoubtedly met with the approval of most of Parliament and the majority of opinion in the nation. Apart from the stoutest believers in collective security, including the communists, there were few who did not accept the necessity at some time of an Anschluss between Germany and Austria. Opinion was influenced, as previously indicated, by the attitude of other nations. For example, Poland, through Colonel Beck, had told the French Foreign Minister, M. Delbos, in December, 1937, that the Anschluss was inevitable and could not be opposed. This attitude disheartened the French who had considered drastic action in order to implement their guarantee to Austria, and worse, it destroyed still further the trust between France and Poland on future joint policies. The French openly were suspicious of Colonel Beck's policy.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, p. 341. Lloyd George stated previously that the British people would "never go to war again for an Austrian quarrel." *H of C., Parl. Deb.*, V. 313, June 18, 1936, col. 1401.

⁶⁷ Neville Chamberlain, while asserting that he still had faith in the League, stated that "the League as constituted today is unable to provide collective security. We must not try to delude ourselves and still more we must not try to delude small and weak nations into thinking that they will be protected by the League against aggression . . ." *H of C., Ibid.*, V. 332, February 22, 1938, col. 227. See also his statement in the *H of C., Ibid.*, V. 333, March 7, 1938, col. 47.

⁶⁸ For an excellent description of the events leading up to the Austrian crisis, see Mackintosh, *The Paths that Led to War*, pp. 324-35, and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs*, V. I, 1938, pp. 179-256.

In Britain, Mr. Churchill, as early as May, 1935, had hinted at the union of Austria with

. . . The Austrian tension increases, and I agree with many that many people talk about guaranteeing the independence of Austria, but what many mean by that is guaranteeing that Austria will be kept separate from Germany, which is a different thing. You may at any time be faced with a position that the will of the Austrian people will have to be turned in a particular direction, and an adverse direction from that which our policy has hitherto proclaimed . . .⁶⁸

In May of 1936, The Government had answered questions in the House on whether violent interference in Austria would be considered as an unfriendly act by stating that there would be no departure from the policy laid down at the Stresa Conference.⁶⁹

Again in July of the same year, Mr. Eden's denial of Lloyd George's famous assertion that the people of Britain would never again go to war for an Austrian quarrel was clearly deliberate and taken to indicate that Britain had no intention of disinteresting itself in the fate of Eastern Europe.⁷⁰

Official British opinion in November, 1937, was that "the continued independence and integrity of Austria were an interest of British foreign policy."⁷¹ However, near the end of the same month, *The Times* published a leading article which suggested that Austria's destiny lay in union with Germany.⁷²

The Left in Britain had always regretted that the Anschluss had been prohibited in the Treaty of Versailles. It was also the Left that recalled during the crisis that there had been several chances of yielding the Anschluss gracefully before Hitler had rose to power in Germany. From that, the Left reasoned that had this been done then, the Nazis might never have had grounds for seizing the power in Germany. Therefore, opposition to the Anschluss was, even on the Left, modified by a bad conscience.⁷³

OPINION AND THE ANSCHLUSS

Within a week of his meeting with Sir Neville Henderson, Hitler took the first step in his swift and well-planned campaign against Austria. With Herr Schuschnigg's defiance of Germany, the Left in Britain had new hope

⁶⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 302, May 31, 1935, col. 1494-6. However, in July, Sir Samuel Hoare had indicated Britain's interest in the maintenance of Austrian independence. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 304, July 8, 1935, col. 694.

⁶⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 312, May 20, 1936, col. 1174-6; May 27, 1936, col. 1993.

⁷⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 315, July 26, 1936, col. 978. See also "The Search for a Foreign Policy," *The Spectator*, July 31, 1936, pp. 188-9.

⁷¹ *The Times*, November 12, 1937.

⁷² *The Times*, November 29, 1937. This was also quoted in the H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 333, March 14, 1938, col. 1045-6. In this regard, see Reed, *Disgrace Abounding* (1939), p. 167.

⁷³ "Hitler Disposes," *The New Statesman and Nation*, February 19, 1938, pp. 276-7. See also Wolfers, *Britain and France Between Two Wars* (1948), p. 197.

of serious Austrian resistance while that same defiance was a source of embarrassment to the Right when it was recalled that Britain had officially asserted that Austria's independence was an important British interest.⁷⁴ Under the circumstances, no one, except the extreme Left, disputed the wisdom of some conversations with Ribbentrop. But those who had supported Mr. Eden feared that concessions would be made which would in turn weaken further British resistance to Hitler's aggressive policy.⁷⁵

Herr Schuschnigg's defiance in the form of a plebiscite did not occur. Nazi disorders increased and Germany dispatched an ultimatum to Austria demanding cancellation of the voting. Such British papers as *The Times* and *Telegraph* openly stated that if the plebiscite had been held, Germany would never have won it.⁷⁶ However, Austria yielded and Germany troops poured in.⁷⁷

Again, the reaction of other powers influenced British reaction to this event. For example, as a result of the German action, there was immediate and grave concern on the part of the United States Government. However, no action was taken until March 17th when Secretary Hull gave the new status "de facto" recognition but amended this recognition with a statement condemning Hitler's method. On April 6, 1938, "under the necessity as a practical means," the United States, following the lead of Britain, recognized the Union and stated that she expected Germany to assume Austria's indebtednesses.

France's actions followed closely those of Great Britain, except that in extending her formal recognition, she merely "acknowledged the German notification of annexation," but no more. Italy appeared to be more disturbed by the fact that she had not been fully consulted nor advised of the move by Hitler than by the act itself. However, Italy refused to cooperate in any joint action with France and Britain, a fact that helps explain the mild attitude of the latter two powers.

Japan recognized the Union, in the meantime nervously watching the effect of this German move on the military preparations within the Soviet Union. Hungary publicly declared that the Union meant no more than the union of one good friend with another. Czechoslovakia, close to the scene of the action, felt that this Austro-German Union was not its private concern and inasmuch as the Great Powers had bowed to Germany, she followed suit. Poland saw no cause for alarm and immediately extended formal

⁷⁵ Statement by the British Prime Minister on the Stresa Conference. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 300, April 17, 1935, col. 1851-2.

⁷⁶ One publication noted prior to the Anschluss that again and again the situation was repeated and each time the Government of Mr. Chamberlain explained its retreat before the dictators. This periodical noted that the mass of the electorate was bewildered and troubled for while the main desire was to keep out of war, opinion was concerned because it felt that a settlement was only being postponed and the longer postponed, the more dangerous and painful when finally made. "Technicalities and Ideologies," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 5, 1938, pp. 356-7. See also Flandin, *Politique Française*, 1919-1940, p. 239.

⁷⁷ *The Times*, March 4, 1938; *Daily Telegraph*, March 5, 1938.

⁷⁸ *The Times*, March 12, 1938.

recognition to the Union, while The Netherlands frankly admitted that she feared an eventual German invasion. Neutral Switzerland openly feared that she and Czechoslovakia would be the next victims.

In Britain, the news of the German action brought with it a feeling of dismay.⁷⁹ The news reached Mr. Chamberlain while he was entertaining Ribbentrop at a luncheon. At the close of the meal, he took Ribbentrop aside and told him how concerned he was over this German action and how seriously his government and people were disturbed at this new threat to the peace. He added that it would delay still further the achievements of that general restoration of confidence which was the ultimate object of the policy of appeasement.⁸⁰

This protest was generally endorsed by the press and by Parliament. Financial London (and the world for that matter) was hard hit by the sudden drop in foreign currencies. Even the pro-German circles in England, the so-called Clivedon Set, were profoundly shocked.

Of all the press, only the *Mail* supported Hitler's action.⁸¹ The *Telegraph*, cautious but friendly to Mr. Chamberlain and disposed to ridicule those who doubted the possibility of a reconciliation with Germany and those who advocated adherence to the policy of collective security, headed its leading article with: "Germany Drops Mask: Ruthless Aggression on Austria." The article stated among other things that "never had the mailed fist been wielded with such dramatic effect."⁸² Similarly, *The Times*, which had been advocating the policy of reconciliation with Germany, headed its newspaper with "Austria Surrenders to Force," and its leading article stated that,

. . . This is the extension of the doctrine of interference going far beyond the special relations which link the two German-speaking states, and it has been supported by a wholesale distortion by the German press of Schuschnigg's policy and of the events of the past few days . . .

In conclusion, *The Times* noted that Hitler's action was not compatible with the policy of appeasement and would therefore produce "the greatest reactions of which it is impossible to foretell the issue."⁸³

⁷⁹ Paul Reynaud was somewhat cynical of this. Paul Reynaud, *La France a sauve l'Europe*, V. I, p. 556.

⁸⁰ *The Times*, March 12, 1938. On Sunday, March 13th, a crowd of 20,000 which had been at a meeting of the International Peace Campaign, massed in front of the German Embassy in London, and while restrained by police, kept up a continuous cry of "Austria and Czechoslovakia must be free," and "Stand by the League," etc. One publication, in commenting on this demonstration, noted that side by side with the pacifist movement was a new "save the world" war spirit growing with public opinion. "March of Events," *The Christian World*, March 17, 1938. See also Flandin, *Politique Francaise, 1919-1940*, p. 244. It should be noted here that in V. III of *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, the reports of a German journalist, Dr. Karl Heinz Abshagen, appear to be more frank and accurate than those of Ribbentrop regarding British opinion during this period. However Dr. Abshagen did believe that Britain would fight if a general conflict arose over the Prague question.

⁸¹ *Daily Mail*, March 14, 1938.

⁸² *Daily Telegraph*, March 14, 1938.

⁸³ *The Times*. "A Blow to Europe." March 15, 1938.

The *Express*, true to its isolationist position, argued that Britain had been mistaken in pledging herself in 1934 to defend the integrity of Austria and that there was no parallel between the invasion of Belgium and the seizure of Austria "because half of Austria wanted Hitler." It added that the question was not what to do about Austria, but what to do if Germany took similar action with regard to her other minorities in neighboring countries. The *Express* concluded with the note that Britain should immediately build up her air force equal to the strongest in Europe."⁸⁴

The *Sunday Express* followed the same line and called for greater armaments even if it impaired the financial structure of the country.⁸⁵ The *Mail*, which was far more pro-Facist and pro-Nazi than the *Express*, called for more arms, but added that Britain must not become involved in a quarrel that did not concern Britain.⁸⁶

On the opposite side, the *News Chronicle* stated that Britain's duty was to prevent war rather than to keep out of it. Under the heading of "Valley of Decision," the *Chronicle* wrote that,

. . . The democratic nations stand in the Valley of Decision. The future of civilization depends on whether they can display enough wisdom, energy and courage in the months-perhaps weeks-immediately ahead.

It must be evident to everyone that what has happened in Austria is the kind of thing that must be expected if governments such as ours act on the principle of yielding to every threat . . . The prospect opened up by the Nazi action is so destructive of civilization that the time has come to say quite bluntly that this kind of thing must not, and should not, be repeated.⁸⁷

The *Manchester Guardian* in an article entitled "The Naked Fist" pointed out that the Austrian disaster made it clear that Hitler would not respond to reason and that this lesson should be clear to Britain.⁸⁸ The *Herald*, under headlines of "Diplomacy of the Mailed Fist," called for a limit to the reign of terror or face the prospect of a world war and it asked for redoubled efforts for the reconstruction of the collective security system.⁸⁹

The *Daily Worker* saw the European situation more clearly than any other paper. After indicating that the forces of democracy and reaction were at grips in three part of the world, it urged the Labor Party to invite all parties and organizations to crusade for peace and democracy.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ *Daily Express*, March 14, 1938.

⁸⁵ *Sunday Express*, March 13, 1938.

⁸⁶ *Daily Mail*, March 14, 1938.

⁸⁷ "Valley of Decision," *News Chronicle*, March 14, 1938.

⁸⁸ "The Naked Fist," *Manchester Guardian*, March 15, 1938.

⁸⁹ "Diplomacy of the Mailed Fist," *Daily Herald*, March 14, 1938.

⁹⁰ *Daily Worker*, March 16, 1938.

The Sunday press was broken down into the same groups of opinion. Only Rothermere's *Sunday Dispatch* was openly pro-Hitler. In that paper, Mr. G. Ward Price wrote an article on the justification of Hitler's action.⁹¹ And in the *Observer*, Mr. Garvin argued that.

The one thing certain is that war itself could not reverse what has taken place. It could not restore the state of things in Central Europe to what they were before. A World War on the subject with Britain engaged would be an insanity and a crime, and there could be no question of it in any responsible quarter in this country.

Mr. Garvin summed up his thoughts with the necessity, even though Hitler might show moderation, of Britain rearming quickly.⁹²

The *Sunday Times* carried a disillusioned article by "Scrutator" who had been a very severe critic of collective security and had urged negotiations with Germany and Italy which, while concluding that a severe blow had been struck at the policy of appeasement, urged a stronger armament program for Britain.⁹³ It was readily apparent that the Conservative press urged the same program—that of no change in policy, but immediate and increased rearmament.

While the front page of the *People* headed its article with "Austria Takes the German Invasion Calmly. Hitler Returns to Boyhood Home," the *Sunday Graphic* denounced the invasion as "an outrage against all democracy and a crime against all civilization."⁹⁴ The *Sunday Pictorial*, like so many other papers, called for more rearmament.⁹⁵

The only other large Sunday paper, *Reynold's News*, came out strongly against the Government. Its leading article, headed "Premier Chamberlain — the Cause of the Crisis," argued that the resignation of Mr. Eden and the opening of conversations with Italy and Germany had been the signal for Hitler to strike again. The *News* called for a new Government in order to avoid a general European war which the present Government was headed for.⁹⁶

While the *Spectator* approved the union,⁹⁷ *The New Statesman* demanded a new Government and the formation of a National Front Government which would sincerely attempt to halt aggression.⁹⁸

⁹¹ *Sunday Dispatch*, March 13, 1938.

⁹² *The Observer*, March 20, 1938.

⁹³ "Scrutator," *The Sunday Times*, March 13, 1938.

⁹⁴ *The People*, March 13, 1938; *Sunday Graphic*, March 13, 1938.

⁹⁵ *Sunday Pictorial*, March 13, 1938.

⁹⁶ "Premier Chamberlain — The Cause of the Crisis," *Reynold's News*, March 13, 1938.

⁹⁷ "After Austria," *The Spectator*, March 18, 1938, pp. 456-7.

⁹⁸ Kingsley Martin, "The Inescapable Facts," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 19, 1938, pp. 468-70. *The Christian World* came out on the side of the *Statesman*. "Jungle Politics," *The Christian World*, March 17, 1938, p. 10.

OPINION IN PARLIAMENT

Meanwhile, the debate on Austria took place on March 14th in the House of Commons, and in the House of Lords on March 23rd. Early in the debate it became clear that the Government would have to restate British foreign policy if it was to continue in office. No one suggested force to rescue Austria, but the real question was whether or not Britain would announce her definite intention of proceeding to the assistance of the next victim on Germany's list.

In the House of Lords, Labor was again well led by Lord Snell on the Austrian issue.⁹⁹ When Lord Redesdale seemed to regard the German annexation of Austria as a matter of congratulation, Lord Cecil expressed a not uncommon opinion by commenting that had Lord Redesdale been a Liberal, a Catholic or a Jew, it was doubtful that he would have talked about a "bloodless operation."¹⁰⁰

The lower House showed that they wanted a definite answer on what the Government's action would be in case of any aggression in the future. Mr. Amery expressed the thought of a great many members of all parties when he stated that the one thing that would certainly mean war was for Britain to go on hovering, half-encouraging Czechoslovakia and France with the idea that Britain stood behind them and half-encouraging Germany that Britain would take no action in any case. He concluded that

... Let us either make up our minds that we must stand out, and let everybody concerned know it, or let us say to France, Czechoslovakia and Germany, in language as plain and simple as we can make it, that the first German soldier or plane to cross the Czech border will bring the whole might of Britain against Germany.¹⁰¹

A powerful speech delivered by Mr. Churchill was very popular and well received by the Opposition in the lower House. Mr. Churchill made a complete and masterly statement of one of two alternative policies open to the British people. It called for a return to the Covenant of the League. "What is ridiculous," he demanded, "about collective security? The only thing ridiculous about it is that we have not got it."¹⁰² The majority of Government supporters received this in silence. While Conservatives had been preaching the impracticability of a collective system for the previous two years, they then faced the prospect of readopting it and the thought was not pleasant.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ H of L., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 108, March 23, 1938, col. 459.

¹⁰⁰ H of L., *Ibid.*, col. 489-90.

¹⁰¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 333, March 14, 1938, col. 211.

¹⁰² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 333, March 14, 1938, col. 340. On March 18th, he wrote: "... The Nazi seizure has produced an effect in Britain deeper and stronger than anything that has occurred since the Great War ... a new spirit is stirring the nation ... It is plain that any combination of Powers must stop aggression and if Britain would take such a stand, the Government would have the support of all in Great Britain." W. Churchill, "The Austrian Eye Opener," *Step by Step*, pp. 223-4.

¹⁰³ "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 19, 1938, p. 471.

In Mr. Chamberlain's report of the German invasion of Austria, he treated with contempt the German assertion that other Powers had no concern with the fate of Austria. This had the effect of soothing opinion, and to that end, he added that,

. . . It seems to us that the methods adopted throughout these events call for the severest condemnation, and have administered a profound shock to all who are interested in the preservation of European peace. It follows that what has passed cannot fail to have prejudiced the hope of removing misunderstandings between nations and promoting international cooperation.¹⁰⁴

However, he later modified this with,

. . . I do not think that the people of this country would want to interfere in a case where two States desired to join together, but there were features about the methods which were employed in this particular case of union which were extremely distasteful to Britain and which profoundly shocked public opinion.¹⁰⁵

With these words, the Prime Minister fairly represented opinion in the country. Nowhere could there be heard any defense of Germany's outrages or any excuse for it. But nowhere in Britain was there any demand that the country go to war, with or without allies, to uncast what had been cast.¹⁰⁶ The only apparent reaction of opinion was that of the demand for more rearmament. Thus, Great Britain, following the lead of Italy, Spain, Turkey, Poland and several minor powers, extended formal recognition to the Union.

¹⁰⁴ H of C., *op. cit.*, March 24, 1938, col. 891. In the week before, the Government appeared to be acting as if nothing had happened. See "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 26, 1938, p. 505. However, by the weekend of the 26th, there were numerous "Chamberlain must go" demonstrations and it appeared that his speech cited above was directed toward gaining more favorable opinion. "The Man at the Wheel," *The Christian World*, March 24, 1938, p. 17. See also Lindsay Roger's admirable treatment of this declaration. "Notes on the Language of Politics," *Political Science Quarterly*, December, 1949, p. 497.

¹⁰⁵ Speech by Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham, April 8, 1938. *The Times*, April 9, 1938, p. 17.

¹⁰⁶ Public feeling immediately after this crisis was indicated very clearly by a poll which found in answer to the question of whether Britain should promise aid to the Czechs if Germany acted toward that country as Germany had acted toward Austria, only thirty-three percent answered in the affirmative, that is, that Britain should promise aid to the Czechs if treated like Austria, while forty-three percent replied in the negative and twenty-four percent had no opinion. "The British Institute of Public Opinion." *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. 4, March 1940, pp. 77-82. See also Zilliacus, *Between Two Wars*, p. 141, and Bonnet, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, p. 85.

CHAPTER VII

OPINION AT MUNICH

Immediately after the German seizure of Austria, public opinion shifted its attention to the danger of the same fate befalling Czechoslovakia.¹⁰⁷ As previously indicated, only one person in three in March, 1938, believed that Britain should assist the Czechs if Germany acted toward her as she had toward Austria.¹⁰⁸ By May of the same year, it was apparent to all that Germany was exerting the utmost pressure on the Czechs. British opinion, then, was interested in knowing if Hitler would go to war if his demands were not met by the Czechs.¹⁰⁹

At the time, Great Britain was not an ally of the Czechs. France and the Soviet Union were allies. However, France had reached the point of following Britain's lead in European politics. Russia was bound to come to the assistance of Czechoslovakia only if France fulfilled her obligations. In the period following the Anschluss, Poland, like so many of the other smaller European countries, wavered back and forth in the tempest of European politics. Therefore, the final responsibility rested with Britain and demonstrated how Britain had gained a large and decisive role in European diplomacy, based on no advance commitments. At the same time, however, Britain had become so involved in the affairs of Eastern and Central Europe that she could not at that time avoid a major role in the German-Czech crisis.¹¹⁰ And it was apparent at the outset of the crisis that the people of Britain were very much interested in the issue for a number of reasons.¹¹¹

Before turning to a closer examination of British opinion as the Czech crisis developed, a few words should be included in regard to the back-

¹⁰⁷ The German Charge d'Affaires in Britain reported that the British Under Secretary, Mr. Butler, had told him that England was aware that Germany would attain "her next goal," but added that the manner in which this was done was, however, decisive for the reaction in England. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. I, No. 750.

¹⁰⁸ "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. 4, March 1940, pp. 77-82. Typical of the press, *The Christian World* noted that on all sides and from all parties, the cry went up that a halt would have to be called to Germany's career of law-breaking and that should Germany molest the Czechs, on the plea of safeguarding the interests of the German minority there, it would prove that the hour for action had struck. "Jungle Politics," *The Christian World*, March 17, 1938, p. 10.

¹⁰⁹ See Bonnet, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, p. 117; Schmidt, Paul, *Hitler's Interpreter*, pp. 89 ff; and Gordon A. Craig, "High Tide of Appeasement," *Political Science Quarterly*, March 1950, pp. 20-37.

¹¹⁰ *The Times*, August 21, 1938. An excellent account of these events in 1938 is found in Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *When There is No Peace* (New York, 1939).

¹¹¹ "Blind Man's Bluff," *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 3, 1938, pp. 335-6. An informative article discussing the factors which made British opinion what it was at the time of the Munich crisis appeared in S. C. Leslie, "How the Public Thinks," *The Spectator*, October 28, 1938, pp. 704-5; November 4, 1938, pp. 761-2; November 11, 1938, pp. 802-3; November 18, 1938, pp. 841-2. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, Ch. II.

ground of Mr. Chamberlain's policy. When shortly after the Austrian crisis, the Prime Minister had refused to give the Czechs a guarantee of British support, he set himself a peculiarly difficult course to follow in foreign policy. He had made it clear then that he would not abandon appeasement. In accordance with this policy, he refused a blank check to France in regard to Czechoslovakia, yet he admitted the considerable probability of Britain becoming involved should France enter the war as a result of honoring her obligations to the Czechs. It had become vitally necessary for the success of Mr. Chamberlain's policy that France should not be drawn into any war.

This, then, was the key to Neville Chamberlain's policy toward Germany as defined after the return of Lord Halifax from Germany in November, 1937. Germany desired the realization of certain limited European territorial ambitions as Mr. Chamberlain saw it. Changes in the map of Europe, the adjustment of national frontiers and the transfer of control over some peoples to another nation, were not to be depreciated in themselves but only if they were accomplished by violent means. The preservation of peace was the essential thing within the limited objectives of Germany. And now that the Austrians had peacefully accepted annexation, war could only come if Czechoslovakia refused to comply with the "fair" demands of the German minority. No stone was to be left unturned, therefore, on the part of Britain at least, to persuade the Czechs, by pressure if need be, to make any and every concessions to meet those demands, and this had to become the key-note of Anglo-French policy.

There was, however, another factor in Mr. Chamberlain's calculations and that was the extreme weakness of Britain's armaments and defences. Britain needed time to bring them up to a safer level at which time there would be some choice in what foreign policy could be followed. Furthermore, Britain did not know to what extent, if any, support could be counted on from the United States in any showdown with Germany. The latter point was probably a major factor influencing British policy then.

OPINION DIVIDED ON THE ISSUE

Many leaders in Britain, in voicing their own fears and those of opinion, brought out the fact that any change or alteration in the independence or territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia was of the upmost concern to Britain. For example, Mr. Churchill stated that "the nazification of the whole of the Danube States is a danger of the first capital magnitude to the British Empire."¹¹²

This same group of people pointed out that Germany would come to dominate Europe and that once she gained control of the strongly fortified borders of Czechoslovakia, her drive to the East would no longer be checked

¹¹² H of C, *Parl. Deb.*, V 333, March 24, 1938, col. 508. Up to the time of Munich, Mr. Churchill's followers were not numerous, but were outspoken enough to attract more attention than their number indicated. "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, August 5, 1938, p. 219.

and as a result, German influence would extend to the Black Sea and the Near East.¹¹³

However, the British Government did not in fact consider the fears of this group. There was never a single admission in any official statement by the Government of concern over the disappearance of the fortified border built by Czechoslovakia. Time after time, the Government stated that Britain's sole interest was to avoid war.¹¹⁴ The Government expressed their position as such that only if Germany indicated that she sought domination rather than satisfaction of her demands would Britain seriously consider changing her foreign policy.¹¹⁵

That Mr. Chamberlain's position probably represented what a majority of people felt was indicated by the fact that his Government continued in office. His statement in the House on March 24th in which he refused to commit Britain to the defense of the Czechs, as previously mentioned for the reason that Britain's interests were not so vital there and that further, it would have divided Europe into two camps, was well received by the House members. Mr. Chamberlain indicated that he had the pacifists in mind when he asserted that conflicts should be settled peaceably and he again reminded opinion of the German pledge not to use force against the Czechs and the Czech promise to make every possible concession.¹¹⁶

It was during the latter part of May, 1938, that an interesting series of moves were made on the international scene. A major crisis developed and it is noteworthy because it represented the last display of unity prior to World War II between Britain, France and Soviet Russia against German aggression. After a Czech border shooting, tension was very high by May 21st. The response of Czechoslovakia's treaty partners was immediate. M. Bonnet announced that if German troops crossed the Czech border, France would at once come to the support of her ally. Soviet Russia also give proof of her readiness to stand by her French and Czech allies, in spite of the lack of support from Rumania and Poland.

¹¹³ The strength of this feeling was indicated in March when a member of the Cabinet, Mr. Lennox-Boyd observed that a pledge to guarantee the Czech frontier was absurd and that he was sure that Mr. Chamberlain would never give one. On March 21, 1938, the House was not inclined to accept either his apology or the statement by Neville Chamberlain regarding that speech. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, March 21, 1938, V. 333, col. 229. The entire press was behind the repudiation of the speech by the Government. For example, see "Mr. Lennox-Boyd's Indiscretion," *The Christain World*, March 24, 1938, p. 2, and "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, March 25, 1938, p. 499.

¹¹⁴ Upon Lord Halifax's return from Germany in November, 1937, Mr. Chamberlain stated that he did not believe that British opinion would approve of maintaining the Czech borders as they were and the plea for a peaceful settlement concluded his thoughts. Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 332-4. *The Times* in December of 1937, as it would often do later, urged the Czechs to make concessions. *The Times*, December 1, 1937. On the other hand, there were those who saw no grounds for this position, as for example, in "An Anglo-French Policy," *The Spectator*, December 3, 1937, pp. 982-3.

¹¹⁵ H of C., *op. cit.*, col. 235.

¹¹⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 333, March 21, 1938, col. 504. The German Charge d'Affaires in London noted that British opinion believed that the situation in Czechoslovakia could not continue, but that it was undoubtedly prepared to do everything possible to meet the German wishes, although at a price, and that furthermore, British opinion did not want to become involved in fighting for such a thoroughly bad cause. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. II, No. 5.

Both Rumania and Poland refused permission for Russian troops to cross their territory in case of war. The Rumanian Government refused to move without previous agreement with Poland, while in Poland, Colonel Beck disclosed himself as a willing accomplice of Hitler.

From London came a declaration of "non-neutrality" which gave unmistakable indication against which side Britain would be "non-neutral."

Thus while the Germans were forced to temporarily beat a political retreat, this ended a brief but very successful example of collective security. Europe had believed herself to be very near war for two days, but was averted for the time being. War was averted not by appeasement of an aggressor, but by a determined show of force and willingness to resist Germany by the potential victim and the victim's allies.

In spite of the fact that it is never possible to gauge exactly what British opinion was at a particular moment during the period of this study except possibly at a General Election, it should be noted that inasmuch as the Parliamentary members were spending many weekends among their constituents, the mood of the House was probably a fair reflection of opinion throughout Britain. It follows then that a remarkable change in the electorate had occurred since the resignation of Mr. Eden, for shortly after Neville Chamberlain's speech cited above, there was a strong movement in support of the Prime Minister.¹¹⁷

It is safe to assume that Lord Halifax was probably justified in telling the House of Lords that the Prime Minister's statement exactly interpreted the mood of the country.¹¹⁸ Mr. Chamberlain by following a middle course between the isolationists and the "committers," exactly suited the main body of opinion who for the most part were still unwilling to rush to either extreme. But it was true that the average citizen and the average member of Parliament seemed to have been more resentful of Fascist and Nazi truculence than they had been at any previous time.¹¹⁹

In addition, opinion was well aware of the fact that when the relative strengths of the European powers teamed up were considered and there was no one in or out of the Government who believed that the Prague Government had any choice but to make some concessions.¹²⁰ Opinion supported the Prime Minister in this regard.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ "The Fight for Peace," *The Christain World*, May 26, 1938, p. 10. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, April 1, 1938, p. 571. This was substantiated as well by German Envoy Dirksen who reported that the then British Cabinet was the first post-war Cabinet which made agreement with Germany one of the major points of its program and that this Cabinet possessed the inner-political strength to carry out this task. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. II, No. 4.

¹¹⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 108, March 30, 1938, col. 687.

¹¹⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 333, March 24, 1938, col. 523-4, 578.

¹²⁰ "Versailles to Munich," *Public Politics Pamphlet* 28, p. 38; Europe after Chamberlain," *The Spectator*, April 1, 1938, pp. 572-3. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. II, No. 314.

¹²¹ Envoy Dirksen noted that British opinion by late May was considerably calmer than it had been earlier in the month and that the Czech crisis had at least the advantage of shaking up politically-minded circles and revealing to British opinion the danger of war inherent in the Sudeten-German problem. He concluded that this awareness went hand in hand with the disinclination to become involved in warlike adventures on account of the Czechs. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. II, No. 4.

OPINION FOLLOWS THE GOVERNMENT

The British Government appeared to base its policy on the assumption that Hitler was ready to risk war in order to reach his objectives. Mr. Chamberlain made it clear that "there was nothing that anyone could do that would prevent the invasion unless the right of self-determination was granted to the Sudeten-Germans and that quickly."¹²² The Government asserted that this was the only hope of a peaceful solution.

The Government's action, to some extent, was determined by public opinion. The people of Britain had been far from enthusiastic about conditions in the Sudetenland or about the way in which the borders in that area had been originally fixed. Had there been no question of self-determination and of oppressed minorities, the British Government could never have adopted the policy they did and at the same time continued in office.¹²³

Duff Cooper aptly expressed the popular feeling with

. . . I saw that if we were obliged to go to war, it would be hard to have it said against us that we were fighting against the principle of self-determination.¹²⁴

And the *Daily Mail* led a campaign against any involvement in the Czech affair and placed the blame for the crisis on the Treaty of Versailles.¹²⁵

The limited resistance Britain did offer to Germany's demands indicated a desire on Britain's part to limit concessions to what could be justified on the basis of just principles. This led the group opposed to concessions, just or unjust, particularly when the demands were backed by the threat of force, to charge that "the Prime Minister's submission to Hitler's demands was not due to a sudden conversion to the justice of the German case, but was extorted by threats of force."¹²⁶

British opinion in this regard was traced in an accurate report by the German Ambassador in London who indicated that since the advent of the Czech crisis, following on the heels of the Anschluss, the old catchwords

¹²² H of C., *op. cit.*, col. 604.

¹²³ The result of the West Falmham by-election, which centered on foreign policy and although indicative of dissatisfaction of Britain's foreign policy in that the Government candidate was decisively beaten, appeared to be rather the exception. It is probable that other factors entered into this campaign and influenced the outcome. See "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 22, 1938, p. 601.

¹²⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V, 339, October 3, 1938, col. 35.

¹²⁵ *Daily Mail*, May 6, 1938, "Czechs Not Our Business." The Mail's proof copy of this article was delivered May 5, 1938 to the German Embassy in London. *Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, V, II, No. 1.

¹²⁶ H of C., *op. cit.*, V, 339, col. 71. The London press was for the most part urging some changes in the Government during June. For example, *The Times* asked whether the divisions of policy between the Government and the Opposition were really as considerable as they seemed and concluded the article with a plea for a "policy of conciliation based on strength, but not a policy of surrender based on weakness." These phrases read in their context contained an implied criticism of Mr. Chamberlain's policy, some even from his own party, and conveyed a strong hint that the Government needed new blood. *The Times*, June 14, 1938. See also "National Leadership," *The New Statesman and Nation*, June 18, 1938, pp. 1016-7.

about the right of existence of small nations, democracy, the League of Nations, the mailed fist of militarism and similar terms were revived and profoundly agitated and disturbed the average Englishman who readily responded to every appeal to his sentimentality. The same reporter further pointed out that of far greater importance still was the fact that the politically-minded Englishman imagined that he had been tactically outwitted and that his power on the Continent was threatened. Therefore the political determination was strengthened to oppose, even at the cost of war, any further attempts to change the balance of power on the Continent without a preliminary understanding with Britain.¹²⁷

As a result of these shifting currents of opinion on the situation, a full scale debate was held in the House on July 25th on the motion for a summer recess. Britain's foreign policy was completely discussed and criticised. Sir Arthur Sinclair opened the debate with the statement that Britain must at all costs stand firm for her principles in order to avoid later the choice of war or appeasement.¹²⁸

Mr. Chamberlain's statement was listened to with far more attention than was usual by the opposition parties. Not a few noted the mistake in his speech when he stated that "throughout the Continent there is a relaxation of that sense of tension which six months before had been present." The Opposition immediately asked in this regard if the Government had forgotten Mr. Churchill's wise warning four months previously in which he had said,

... Now that Austria has been struck down, we are disturbed and alarmed, but in a little while there may be another pause . . . Then people will be saying, "There now, see how the alarmists have been confuted, Europe has calmed down, it has all blown away, and the war scare has passed away . . ." The Prime Minister will perhaps repeat what he said a few weeks ago, that the tension in Europe is greatly relaxed.¹²⁹

This speech was used with great effect by the opponents of the Government in the last debate on foreign policy before the summer recess.¹³⁰

Opinion, then, in the summer of 1938, in Britain was still widely split on foreign policy. This division was noted in the break between the pacifists and the followers of collective security at the National Peace Council's Annual Conference at Bristol. Mr. Kingsley Martin pointed out that the division there lay between those who thought that it was worth while to

¹²⁷ See Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War, V. II. No. 4.

¹²⁸ H. of C. *Parl. Deb.*, V. 335 July 25 1938 col. 342. See also the comments on this debate in "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, July 29, 1938, p. 197.

¹²⁹ H. of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 335 March 24, 1938, col. 478.

¹³⁰ H. of C. *Ibid.*, V. 337 July 25 1938 col. 315. A German diplomat in London noted that the recent developments, i. e. the Czech crisis, following closely on the crisis which the Anschluss had settled, accelerated by the fact that the whole complex of German-English relations was being more and more drawn into the vortex of British domestic politics. Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War, V. II. No. 4.

make an attempt to defeat the fascist threat by counter-propaganda and by that nice adjustment of threat and concession that was called diplomacy and those who were so sure that any display of force would only breed war and who hoped that Britain would retire from the immediate struggle.¹³¹

Another example of how opinion split on the issue is that of the Liberal Summer School. One group there believed that Nazi Germany might be made to reason by concessions while the other group feared that the Second World War had already begun.¹³² These examples provide an indication of the turmoil that opinion in Britain was undergoing at this time.¹³³

While Parliament recessed late in July in a spirit of utterly false optimism and few challenged the Prime Minister's amazing statement that all was well on the international scene, Lord Runciman's mission was being hailed as promising by most of the press. However, the subsequent *volte-face* by Lord Runciman earned for him as much criticism as his earlier step had earned in praise.¹³⁴

GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO LEAD OPINION

Meanwhile during August, official alarm in London was reflected almost daily in one section of the press. For example, one publication stressed the scale of the German army exercises then in progress.¹³⁵ Four days later, the same publication asserted that success on the road to peace depended upon the action and spirit of minorities, in particular the Sudeten Germans, as well as the Czechs.¹³⁶ A short while later this newspaper declared that "Britain can see no case for a breach of relations between Berlin and Prague."¹³⁷

On the official side, Sir John Simon expressed the Government's growing concern in a speech at Lanark late in August. He declared that "war is never inevitable if all the nations alike will do their utmost to remove the causes," and then while reaffirming the Prime Minister's statement of March 24th, he concluded that it was impossible to assume a limit to the disturbance that a conflict would involve.¹³⁸

¹³¹ Kingsley Martin, "The Peace Movement," *The New Statesman and Nation*, June 4, 1938, pp. 946-7.

¹³² "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, August 6, 1938, p. 206.

¹³³ Ambassador Drksen noted at this time that German-English relations, in their totality, were uncertain and extremely strained from the standpoint of British opinion. *Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, V. II, No. 4.

¹³⁴ "Lord Runciman's Mission," *The Christain World*, August 4, 1938, p. 8; "Lord Runciman's Mission," *The Spectator*, July 29, 1938, pp. 188-9. See also H. of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 344, March 5, 1939, col. 1936-8; Seton-Watson, *From Munich to Danzig*, pp. 59-62; an editorial by H. F. Armstrong, *Foreign Affairs*, January, 1939, p. 233; Flandin, *Politique Francaise*, p. 259; Bonnet, *De Washington Au Qual D'Orsay*, p. 173.

¹³⁵ *The Times*, August 25, 1938.

¹³⁶ *The Times*, August 29, 1938.

¹³⁷ *The Times*, August 31, 1938.

¹³⁸ *The Times*, August 28, 1938. A foreign diplomat noted that Sir John Simon was one of the more prominent examples of that typically British mentality which preferred a bad compromise to a straight solution if that solution required the assumption of any responsibility. *Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second War*, V. II, No. 6. The unreasonableness of the German demands and the restraint in Prague undoubtedly swung a mass of hesitant opinion in Britain over to the Czech side immediately prior to the crisis. See "The Fate of Europe," *The Spectator*, September 2, 1938, pp. 356-7.

On September 6th, *The Times* again startled opinion by observing almost nonchalantly that after all it might be as well if the Czechs relinquished altogether "that fringe of alien population who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race" in order to prevent the threat of war.¹³⁹

While critics charged that *The Times* lead came straight out of the Foreign Office, it was reliably reported that the lead actually came out of the Prime Minister's inner circle. This assertion was later supported in the same paper, though not in such a pronounced form.¹⁴⁰

As a result of these events, a sizable section of the British press was very critical of *The Times* line. For example, both *The Spectator* and *The Statesman* called for firmness with Hitler and demanded that Germany be told in plain words that Britain would stand for no more aggression.¹⁴¹ However a greater section of the press was concerned over the number of important people close to Mr. Chamberlain's Government who were traveling to Germany on so-called "peace" trips.¹⁴²

An interesting side-light at this time which had some degree of influence on opinion as the crisis grew was the effort of Lord Halifax to obtain American backing on British policy. Lord Halifax had, from time to time, inquired as to President Roosevelt's attitude toward the situation in Europe, but without ever making a formal request. The United States State Department replied simply by referring to the radio speech delivered by Secretary Hull on August 16, 1938, and to Mr. Roosevelt's address at Kingston, Ontario two days later.¹⁴³ While these speeches restated the dangers of isolation and called upon the American people to cooperate with other nations to safeguard the peace, they drew the line at foreign entanglements. The British could derive little comfort from them or from the State Department's position that specific policy could not be defined when based on future circumstances.

M. Bonnet endeavored to achieve success in the same line where Lord Halifax had failed. He suggested early in September that in case of dire necessity Mr. Roosevelt might act as arbiter and again later, that the United States Government might speak out in Berlin against the use of force, but these suggestions were given no encouragement in Washington. While the American President dropped the idea of arbitration, he did send

¹³⁹ *The Times*, September 6, 1938, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. II, No. 443 and 456. It was reported to Berlin that the British Foreign Office clearly denied that *The Times* reflected the British Government's views. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. II, No. 248.

¹⁴¹ "Hitler's Objective," *The Spectator*, September 2, 1938, pp. 361-2; "Blind Man's Bluff," *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 3, 1938, pp. 335-6. This attitude and its effect on British opinion was noted with concern by the German Embassy in London. *Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, V. II, No. 6.

¹⁴² There was criticism as well of Lady Chamberlain's visit with Franco as there had been when she visited Mussolini. See "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 10, 1938, p. 372. Parallel with this, the press conducted a "Letter" campaign which centered on righting the wrongs of Versailles. For example, see "What Readers Think," *The Christian World*, September 15, 1938, p. 8.

¹⁴³ *New York Times*, August 17, 19, 1938.

messages to the parties involved in which the dangers of a dispute to world peace were indicated. When all parties replied, the United States invited other nations to support the American appeal and Mr. Roosevelt personally besought the aid of Mussolini in behalf of continued negotiations. However, the offer did not include the sending of an American representative. At any rate, the record indicates that Hitler had already decided the course which led to the Munich Conference.

In the early part of September, public opinion in Britain was only beginning to wake up to the danger facing their country. Even the *Daily Express* was serious.¹⁴⁴ But as was observed, the public had long before given up reading dismal headlines. They had long before become conditioned to reading war news and being told that it was not Britain's concern. Therefore at this stage of the crisis, they paid slight attention to the warning signals.¹⁴⁵

By late in the same month, this situation had been completely altered. Up to this time, there had been a surprising failure on the part of the average person to grasp the gravity of the situation. Now most opinion fully understood the danger facing the country and very few would have criticised the Government for any firmness which might have led to war. It is interesting to note that no such unity had existed in 1914. One reason for this may have been that opinion was not as interested at the earlier date as opinion was in foreign affairs in 1938.¹⁴⁶

The issues at Munich had been thrashed out for months before from every angle and nothing so dramatically demonstrated the solidarity of the nation as the fact that on fundamentals even the *Observer* and the *Mail* had swung into what, with the exception of the *Chronicle*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the isolationist *Express*, was the general line-up giving an unqualified mandate to Mr. Chamberlain.¹⁴⁷

WORLD REACTION

The most striking phase of the reaction of the outside powers was that of Poland and Hungary. Poland, a product of the First World War, upon being consulted by Britain and France some time before the Munich Pact, expressed her indifference to the plight of her neighbor to the south,

¹⁴⁴ *Daily Express*, September 4, 1938.

¹⁴⁵ "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 3, 1938, pp. 338-9.

¹⁴⁶ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, September 23, 1938, pp. 468-9. The German Embassy in London noted in a dispatch to Berlin this solidarity in almost the same words after remarking on the fact that attacks on Mr. Chamberlain had completely ceased at this particular time. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. II, No. 452 and V. IV, No. 459.

¹⁴⁷ "The Struggle for Peace," *The Christian World*, September 22, 1938, p. 10. There was a demand also for another nation-wide ballot such as the Peace Ballot of 1935 on the issue of war. "A General Election," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, p. 521; "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, September 16, 1938, p. 430. Paul Reynaud, *La France a sauve l'Europe*, V. I, p. 571; and Bonnet, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, p. 233. While the Trades Union Congress at Blackpool passed a resolution demanding collective defense against aggression, Mr. Garvin's once friendly *Observer* was now anti-German. Both these currents of opinion were reported to Berlin by the German Embassy in London. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. II, No. 458 and V. IV, No. 248.

and pointed to her treaty of non-aggression with Germany. Closer to the time of Munich, Poland had even placed some of her own territorial demands on the Czechs. Hungary, of whom not much else could have been expected since she was openly pro-German, likewise laid claim to parts of Slovakia and such parts of Ruthenia as would give her a common frontier with Poland.

In the United States, the official and unofficial reaction was one of great relief mingled with a little pride at the role President Roosevelt was believed to have played in easing the crisis. And as in Britain, all public opinion polls in the United States indicated that the American public had been more interested in the Munich affair than in any other previous event in the international scene.

In France there was immediate relief, but France had lost heavily by this German action. France, in a broad sense, had gone back on her part of assistance with the Prague Government. She had lost her "Little Entente" and, as many French statesmen believed, the allegiance with Poland and Soviet Russia as well.

In Italy, the Pact was received with great cheers, while Russia, like Britain, but perhaps with more sincerity, announced her readiness to come to the aid of the Czechs if the French acted. It is likely that the Soviet Union was certain long before this that France and Great Britain would not fight for Czechoslovakia and that the Prague Government would not fight without support from the West. In these circumstances, the Soviet leaders could pledge maximum support in the resistance to aggressor. The attitude of the Western Powers was sufficiently clear so that any remaining idea of "collective security" in Soviet circles was pushed into the background and the retreat into isolation gathered further momentum.¹⁴⁸

The Polish attitude followed the line of reasoning that since Europe was on the threshold of a new era—one in which there was to be a "peaceful" revision of frontiers, where the nation that could out-bluff the others gained the most. Under these circumstances, she believed she would be better off if she joined with the most powerful side. Thus, Poland appeared to side with the dictators and bitterly denounced both France and Britain for not supporting her claims against the Czechs.

The Netherlands felt that the Munich Pact was clear evidence that small nations could no longer depend upon larger ones for assistance in time of a crisis and that, therefore, all the small nations should concentrate on more and better methods for their own defense.

Rumania and Yugoslavia were two members of the "Little Entente" who were the most vitally affected by the crisis. Rumania, both officially and otherwise, called the Pact a "breach of promise" and indicated that

¹⁴⁸ Wollenberg, *The Red Army*, pp. 283-5. A well documented account of Soviet foreign policy in the period under study is found in Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia*, V. II, pp. 120-166.

her foreign policy would henceforth be in line with Germany's wishes. While the Yugoslav Government prevented the full text of the Pact from being printed in the press, it did, however, make representations jointly with Rumania to Hungary, protesting the Hungarian seizure of Czech territory.

THE AGREEMENT AND OPINION

No other international conference since Versailles had created so much attention in Britain as that at Munich, on September 29, 1938,¹⁴⁹ and public opinion expressed itself very visibly when Mr. Chamberlain returned.¹⁵⁰ From all classes and sections of the public in Britain, messages of thanks and congratulations poured in to the Government.¹⁵¹ Hostile comment appeared only a few days later and was the first indication of the shift in opinion that was to become complete by the following March.

Up to the time of Munich, generally all parties helped confirm the impression of satisfaction with Neville Chamberlain's personal visits to Germany.¹⁵² In the bitter debates that followed Munich, critics had a difficult time placing the blame for Munich entirely on the Government when it was known that at the time Hitler's invitation arrived, the entire House applauded enthusiastically with the exception of Mr. Gallacher and Sir Arthur Sinclair, both of whom had wished Mr. Chamberlain luck at the time, but expressed the hope that justice would be done to the Prague Government.¹⁵³

PRESS FOLLOWS OPINION

The leading articles in the press of Britain in the first days following Munich were a remarkable demonstration of public opinion. The majority were all but unanimous in their expression of deep thanks to the Govern-

¹⁴⁹ See S. C. Leslie, "How the Public Thinks," II, *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938, pp. 761-2.

¹⁵⁰ The official documents on the Munich Pact are found in *Cmd 5847* and *Cmd 5848*. For a reaction on his return, see *The Times*, September 30, 1938, p. 1. Some opinion held that Mr. Chamberlain had deliberately staged the dramatic moment in the House when he received the offer from Hitler. Seton-Watson states that he hoped never to see anything like it again, while Mr. Nicolson called it "Mass hysteria." Seton-Watson, *From Munich to Danzig*, pp. 94-100. However Mr. Leslie stated that he believed that events moved too fast for the British public to follow during the later part of September and whether the decisions taken then were right or wrong, they were not the decisions of an organized public opinion. He further noted that opinion was thoroughly disorganized and at the heels of events, moving with a bounding speed which left opinion bruised for some time after Munich. S. C. Leslie, "How the Public Thinks," II, *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938, pp. 761-2. For a detailed account of the French reaction, see *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 332, and Flandin, *Politique Française*, pp. 277-8.

¹⁵¹ *The Times*, October 3, 1938, p. 4. While the correspondence from readers was huge, indicating at least the deep interest in the event, not all readers expressed satisfaction with the Munich terms. See "Correspondence-Letters on the Crisis," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 3, 1938, pp. 532-6.

¹⁵² In this regard, the German Embassy in London made an interesting comment in noting the opposition of Britain and France to the Godesberg terms. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 248.

¹⁵³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 339, September 28, 1938, col. 311-2; 323. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 248. Prior to Munich, a small part of opinion had early hinted at a sell-out at Munich. "A Momentous Mission," *The Spectator*, September 30, 1938, p. 503.

ment and to Mr. Chamberlain for securing continued peace.¹⁵⁴ Not one suggested that any issue at Munich was worth a war. Some did stress the high price for this peace and offered sympathy to the Czechs, but even papers on the Left with one notable exception did not take the Government to task immediately and offered almost no hint of the bitter criticism of Munich that was to appear in later months. There is every reason to believe that the judgements on Munich by the press at this represented opinion in Britain.

While *The Times* commented that war would have come to Britain had the Government been in less resolute hands, it asserted that Mr. Chamberlain had returned with the greatest honors.¹⁵⁵ *The Telegraph*, in acknowledging the nation's gratitude to the Prime Minister, asked whether the price was too high and what kind of peace had been achieved.¹⁵⁶ *The Express* asserted that the Munich Agreement had proven its repeated statements to the effect that there would be no war in either 1938 or 1939.¹⁵⁷ While the *Mirror* was thankful for the peace resulting from the Conference,¹⁵⁸ the *Sketch* and *Mail* praised Neville Chamberlain and expressed the hope that the Munich Agreement would be the start of an Anglo-German policy of understanding.¹⁵⁹

On the other side, the *Chronicle*, while noting the widespread welcome given to the Agreement, asked,

... For all that, we may already begin to ask what is the price we have had to pay. That price is the sacrifice of a small and noble people ... That is not a comforting reflection for the British nation and when we throw up our hats in rejoicing for the continuance of peace, it should have a sobering effect.¹⁶⁰

And the *Herald* admitted that while the whole Agreement was worth the price, the entire plan was open to grave criticism on a number of important points.¹⁶¹

The evening papers were divided along the same lines as the morning press. The *Evening News* pointed out that Neville Chamberlain was hailed all over the world as the man who wanted peace and got it at Munich.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ However there was early criticism of the Government's conduct during the crisis. The Government was accused of keeping the discussions secret, refusing to call Parliament into session until after the terms had been fixed, manipulation of the press by the use of minister's statements on the understanding that no name would be quoted and that the same information was given to the public dressed in various disguises. There was resentment that no questions were allowed at the Government press conference during the crisis. See "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 24, 1938, p. 448. Foreign observers noted these offshots of opinion as well. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 248.

¹⁵⁵ *The Times*, October 1, 1938.

¹⁵⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, October 1, 1938. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 248.

¹⁵⁷ *Daily Express*, September 30, 1938.

¹⁵⁸ *Daily Mirror*, October 1, 1938.

¹⁵⁹ *Daily Sketch*, October 1, 1938; *Daily Mail*, October 1, 1938.

¹⁶⁰ *News Chronicle*, October 1, 1938.

¹⁶¹ *Daily Herald*, October 1, 1938.

¹⁶² *Evening News*, September 30, 1938.

The *Standard* suggested that while criticism was directed against the British Government for failing to secure better terms at Munich, the unanswerable argument to that was that war had been avoided.¹⁶³

The *Star*, while very critical of the Agreement, noted that,

. . . The bill has still to be sent in and met. The matters which have now been settled without war and are to be the subject of consultation instead of war between this country and Germany have led to the expenditure of millions on armaments . . . We may well be grateful for the outcome, but we are entitled to resent the expensive and unreasonable process.¹⁶⁴

The Sunday press came out in almost unanimous support for the Agreement. The *Sunday Times*, under the heading of "Memorable Week in Europe," demanded full credit for Mr. Chamberlain in bringing a boundless sense of relief to the British people.¹⁶⁵ The *Sunday Chronicle*, *News of the World*, the *People*, the *Observer*, and *The Christain World* followed *The Times* in lauding the feat of the British Prime Minister.¹⁶⁶ While the *Sunday Express* and *Sunday Dispatch* hailed the Agreement in glowing terms and called for a stronger Britain.¹⁶⁷ *Reynold's News* was very hostile in stating that,

. . . Chamberlain was supported by the strength, provided he showed the will, to flood the world's mind with relief of real respite, to free its heart from the shame of betrayal. Honesty compels the comment that he did neither. He did not silence the shout . . . He only deflected the avalanche. It will fall with crushing cruelty upon the Czechs.¹⁶⁸

The *Manchester Guardian* probably summed up the general feeling by noting the fact that the whole of western civilization was saved at Munich although the Czechs had suffered greatly.¹⁶⁹

Both the *Political Quarterly* and *The New Statesman* were highly critical of the Agreement. While *The Statesman*, which had hinted at a "sell-out" early in the negotiations, asserted that the Agreement was such a complete "sell-out" that it staggered even the staunchest supporters of appeasement,¹⁷⁰ the *Political Quarterly* more than ever urged a strong collective security system which would include Russia.¹⁷¹ Strangely enough,

¹⁶³ *Evening Standard*, September 30, 1938.

¹⁶⁴ *Star*, September 30, 1938.

¹⁶⁵ "Memorable Week in Europe," *Sunday Times*, October 2, 1938.

¹⁶⁶ *Sunday Chronicle*, October 2, 1938; *News of the World*, October 2, 1938; *People*, October 2, 1938; *Observer*, October 2, 1938; *The Christain World*, October 6, 1938. Interestingly enough, one of the groups behind the *Christain World*, the Assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, at their 98th Convention, declared that the British nation shared in the guilt of an international order which subordinated justice to power. See "From the Shaken to the Unshaken," *The Christain World*, October 6, 1938, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ *Sunday Express*, October 2, 1938; *Sunday Dispatch*, October 2, 1938.

¹⁶⁸ *Reynold's News*, October 2, 1938.

¹⁶⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, October 1, 1938.

¹⁷⁰ "Surrender to Hitler," *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 24, 1938, 444-5.

¹⁷¹ See A. J. Rowse, "Reflections on the European Situation," *The Political Quarterly*, V, 9, 1938, pp. 334-50.

The Spectator, once a firm supporter of the Government's foreign policy, became highly critical of the Agreement, and although alienating many readers, asserted later that its circulation increased as a result of its stand on the Agreement.¹⁷² While *Punch* savagely attacked the Agreement, *The Economist*, like several other periodicals, called for a stronger collective security system order to halt further aggression.¹⁷³

Thus the free press of Britain, while expressing for the most part a chorus of praise for the Agreement, tied certain reservations to their praise which was an indication of the change in opinion that would swing faster and faster away from appeasement in the months to come.¹⁷⁴

OPINION IN PARLIAMENT

Mr. Chamberlain's policy up to and including Munich was undoubtedly approved by a majority of people in Britain.¹⁷⁵ Yet it would be a mistake to interpret this to mean that opinion was entirely satisfied with the terms of the agreement. The conditions of the peace so narrowly won were deplored everywhere. But this was not the decisive factor in the great controversy which opened immediately in Parliament. The question was whether Britain would have rejected the Munich terms at the price of war.¹⁷⁶

The Opposition and those who were not in favor of appeasement could not answer the question of whether war would have come if a different policy had been followed by Britain. They argued that Hitler had been bluffing and that a policy of firmness would have averted war and saved the Czechs. The point was that if the direction of Britain's foreign policy had been in their hands and if they had found that Hitler was not bluffing, would the Opposition have gone to war?¹⁷⁷

There was another consideration which influenced opinion at the time of the Munich crisis. That was the attitude of France as well as the United States. Had the French Cabinet decided on September 13th to honor their

¹⁷² "The Spectator and the Crisis," *The Spectator*, October 28, 1938, p. 699.

¹⁷³ *Punch*, September 30, 1938, p. 8. The editor of *The Economist* upon his retirement in October, 1938, wrote that his editorship had begun with high hopes of world appeasement at the Washington Naval Conference and had closed with a hair's breadth escape from world war and a precarious truce. Sir Walter Layton, "From Washington to Munich," *The Economist*, October 22, 1939, p. 57.

¹⁷⁴ See Frank Singleton, "A Diversity of Men," *The Spectator*, October 21, 1938, p. 649.

¹⁷⁵ See *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 248. At the height of the crisis, opinion had accepted Mr. Chamberlain's statement that "... However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbor, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British Empire in war simply on her account. If we have to fight, it must be on larger issues than that ... if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted." Neville Chamberlain, radio address to the country on September 27, 1938, *The Times*, September 28, 1938.

¹⁷⁶ For a well-written account of this viewpoint, see "The New Europe," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, pp. 516-7. Mr. Flandin indicates the difference in feeling between the British and French Parliaments at this time. Flandin, *Politique Française*, pp. 278-9.

¹⁷⁷ Although developed from the Labor point of view, Hugh Dalton gave a very good account of the four days debate in the House on the Agreement. Hough Dalton, "The Crisis in Retrospect," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 15, 1938, pp. 561-2.

treaty obligations and given a promise of assistance to the Czechs if attacked by Germany, British opinion might well have felt that there was no reason for Mr. Chamberlain to have gone to Munich. There was the sharpest contrast between the state of public opinion in the two countries.¹⁷⁸

When Parliament met on Monday, October 3, 1938, opinion in Britain was only beginning to examine more closely the consequences of Munich. The weekend saw the disappearance of the emotional relief felt immediately after the Agreement was concluded and its replacement on Monday with some rational thought on the part of opinion. The threat of personal danger had receded sufficiently for many in Britain to remember the Czechs and to recognize that they had been saved from war only at the expense of the Czechs. Therefore, by Monday, the more thoughtful part of opinion was beginning to realize that there was some room for guilt and humiliation and even some shame along with that sense of relief which was still the predominant feeling.¹⁷⁹

British supporters of the Czechs, including Professor Seton-Watson and Mr. H. Wickham Steed, sought to mobilize opinion by informing Members of Parliament about some of the aspects of the pre-Munich story which had been omitted or glossed over by the Prime Minister in his statement on September 28, 1938.¹⁸⁰

A majority of Britains approved the Prime Minister's accomplishment, but there was increasing criticism of the means which had been employed to do it and the necessity for its having to be done at all. Although very few at the time appreciated fully the futility and the danger inherent in the Munich Agreement, the conditions of the peace so narrowly won were disliked by many.¹⁸¹

Within the ranks of his own party, Mr. Chamberlain was faced with severe censure and even revolt. There was a short period when it appeared as though a number of younger Conservatives would break from the party, pressure was applied and the revolt was put down. Instead it was Duff Cooper who remained a rebel.¹⁸²

In the House debate, much of the criticism directed at Mr. Chamberlain was deprived of its effectiveness by the fact that many of his critics, by

¹⁷⁸ "Surrender to Hitler," *The New Statesman and Nation*, September 24, 1938, pp. 444-5; "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, p. 521.

¹⁷⁹ In this regard, see *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 251.

¹⁸⁰ See Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich, Prologue to Tragedy*, p. 182. On October 3rd, a manifesto on the Munich Pact was issued by a number of well-known publicists who were opposed to Mr. Chamberlain's foreign policy. It declared that had British policy in the preceding six years been different, this choice between war and submission to evil would never have arisen. The signatories were a curiously mixed lot, ranging from Lord Cecil to Kingsley Martin. "The Critics," *The Christain World*, October 8, 1938, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ The film released in Britain immediately after Munich showing Neville Chamberlain's career, including events at roudie, long planned, received a mixed reception, not altogether good and it was withdrawn shortly afterwards. "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, p. 521.

¹⁸² "Party Advantage and Public Interest," *The Spectator*, October 7, 1938, pp. 546-7; *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 248.

the previous action, had supported the appeasement policy. The Labor and Liberal Opposition were in part responsible for Britain's military unpreparedness because they had opposed rearmament since 1934. In addition, there were those among Neville Chamberlain's own followers who had disowned the policy of appeasement, men like Mr. Eden, and yet these people did not join with Mr. Churchill who had been continuously calling for increased armaments.¹⁸³

However, it should be noted that after the resignation of Mr. Eden, there were two groups of dissident Tories, one led by Mr. Churchill and the other by Mr. Eden. Both were in sympathy with each other in the growing realization of the Nazi menace. Some of those in both groups believed from 1933 onward that Germany's aggression would have to be halted, while others of the groups reached the point in progressive stages, but who at one time or another had believed in the possibility of a peaceful agreement with Germany.¹⁸⁴

All of these rebel Tories were united at Munich in their disapproval of the policy which had made Munich necessary. But by the terms of the resolution before the House, members were not only asked to approve the Agreement reached at Munich, but the entire Government policy leading up to it. In the following pages, it will be shown that these rebel Tories abstained rather than turning against the Government.¹⁸⁵

Many House members shared the sentiments expressed by Mr. Victor Rallies in this statement that "there should be full appreciation of the fact that our leader will go down to history as the greatest European statesman of this or any time."¹⁸⁶ A heartfelt sense of thankfulness for the avoidance of war was the underlaying and predominant feature of the debate, and it is significant that nearly all speakers paid tribute to the unremitting efforts of Mr. Chamberlain to secure peace.

It was upon the basic issue of war and peace that Mr. Chamberlain and his advisors defended the Government's policy. Mr. Chamberlain's remark that "I feel convinced that by my action I did avoid war and I feel equally sure that I was right in doing so" proved a strong argument.¹⁸⁷ It

¹⁸³ "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, pp. 519-20. See also Bonnet, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, p. 307.

¹⁸⁴ See J. L. Hammond, "British Policy Now," I, *The Spectator*, October 14, 1938, p. 619.

¹⁸⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 339, October 6, 1938, col. 208. It is of interest to note that it was definitely the action of the dissident Tories in refusing to join the Opposition coalition that made any alternative administration impossible at this time. "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 15, 1938, p. 560.

¹⁸⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 297.

¹⁸⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 399, October 2, 1938, col. 97. It was observed that the British people were more willing to fight than was their Government because there had not been the slightest hesitation in responding to mobilization orders or in preparing for the worst. However, as noted previously, most of the press was for peace and no popular leader emerged to call for war. See "Versailles to Munich," *Public Politics Pamphlet* 28, p. 53. The German Ambassador noted that Sir Horace Wilson was one of the most influential men in the British Government and that Mr. Chamberlain consulted him on all matters. *Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, V. II, No. 5. A later memorandum from the Ambassador reported that during the critical days of Munich, Mr. Chamberlain had actually made decisions alone with his two most intimate advisors and the last decisions were made without any advice from his Cabinet, Lord Halifax or the Foreign Office. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV. No. 251.

was on this note of challenge that the Government asked the House for a vote of confidence without consideration of nonessentials. Sir John Simon further added that,

How many of those among us are there who, if we could undue what was then done, would reject the settlement to which the Prime Minister put his hand on Friday and instead—because it was the only alternative—would fling the world into the cauldron of immediate war.¹⁸⁸

The Opposition was on more favorable ground when it criticised the Government for their treatment of the Czechs. Herbert Morrison's phrase for the Czechs was "lost and betrayed."¹⁸⁹ Against this criticism, the Government could only praise the gallantry, sacrifice and self-control of the victims of Munich. While Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons was saying that "it is the Czechs who kept the peace of Europe and it is their sacrifice which has averted war,"¹⁹⁰ Lord Halifax was telling the upper House that "without his (Mr. Chamberlain's) help it would have been impossible to avoid a European war."¹⁹¹

While Britain had agreed to the Pact, the Government promised in the House that it would do all in its power to implement the guarantee of the new frontiers which it had undertaken to settle. This obligation was called by one Government spokesman as a "moral obligation."¹⁹² Furthermore, the Government proposed to grant the Czechs a loan of ten million pounds and further asserted that the Czechs were better off as a result of the Munich Agreement than they would have been had war resulted.¹⁹³

However, some members of Mr. Chamberlain's own party placed the wider aspects of the problem of the crisis before public opinion in an understandable manner. Duff Cooper gave the reasons for his resignation in an effective speech. He indicated that it was his failure to convince his colleagues to look beyond the crisis over which he had resigned. While he admitted that the people of Britain had been totally unprepared to fight for the Czechs, he asserted that it was not for the Czechs that the British people would have been fighting for because

. . . It was not for Serbia that we fought for in 1914. It was not even for Belgium . . . We were fighting then, as we should have been fighting last week, in order that one Great Power should not be allowed . . . to dominate by brutal force the Continent of Europe . . .

¹⁸⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 116. When the debate first started, one publication had called Mr. Chamberlain's case "impregnable." *The Times*, October 3, 1939.

¹⁸⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, October 8, 1938, col. 607.

¹⁹⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 339, October 8, 1938, col. 711. Lord Simon later stated that he never learned whether Mr. Chamberlain really believed in Hitler's good intentions when he flew back to London and announced peace for our time. "I think not," Lord Simon concluded, "for, under the strain of his final exertions and in the presence of cheering multitudes showing their relief, Mr. Chamberlain was into using unguarded words of emotion which exaggerated what had been achieved." Lord Simon, *Retrospect* (London, 1952), p. 245.

¹⁹¹ H of L, *Ibid.*, V. 110, October 6, 1938, col. 305.

¹⁹² H of C., *op. cit.*, col. 675.

¹⁹³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 652-3.

In his conclusion in the House, he expressed what was in the minds of many when he questioned Mr. Chamberlain's confidence in Hitler's goodwill by listing all of Germany's broken promises since 1933.¹⁹⁴

These same doubts were mentioned by Mr. Richard Law, who stated that he wished that he could see any strong grounds for Neville Chamberlain's statement that he had brought back "peace with honor." Mr. Law then asked,

... We have now obtained, by peaceful means, what we have fought four wars to prevent from happening, namely, the domination of Europe by a single Power.¹⁹⁵

It was left to Winston Churchill to proclaim unerringly the cause and consequence of the humiliation of Munich. He noted that,

It is the most grievous consequence which we have yet experienced of what we have done and of what we have left undone in the last five years—five years of futile good intention, five years of eager search for the line of least resistance, five years of uninterrupted retreat of British power . . . We are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude which has befallen Britain . . . Do not let us blind ourselves to that . . .¹⁹⁶

It was remarkable that, in a debate on a policy based on "peace for our time", the only issue on which there was complete unanimity of opinion was the vital necessity for the rapid completion of Britain's rearmament.¹⁹⁷ Mr. Churchill, Mr. Attlee, and Duff Cooper from the ranks of those critical of the Government, left no doubt of their feelings on this subject. On the other hand, the Prime Minister pledged redoubled efforts along these lines.¹⁹⁸

Critics of the Government quickly pointed out the alarming frankness of certain Government spokesmen, Sir Samuel Hoare, Sir John Simon and Neville Chamberlain, regarding certain weaknesses in Britain's defenses.

¹⁹⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 339, October 2, 1938, col. 32. A foreign observer at the time noted that Duff Cooper did not succeed in dissipating the impression that he was more concerned about a good political starting point than with the over-all interests of the nation. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 248. See also "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, pp. 519-20, for several interesting remarks regarding opinion and the fears of opinion.

¹⁹⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 37.

¹⁹⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 114. One publication called this the most effective and worthwhile speech by the side opposing any and all appeasement. "After Munich," *The Christain World*, October 13 1938, p. 10. See also the *Manchester Guardian*, October 8, 1938, pp. 519-20.

¹⁹⁷ Official German policy on this issue was to split public opinion, that is, to achieve a breach between those who on no account would want a war with Germany and those who held the view that, at Munich, England had recoiled before Germany and demanded increased armaments in order to face up squarely to Germany "next time," regardless of the consequences. See *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 253.

¹⁹⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 339, October 2, 1938, col. 146. See also "The Critics," *The Christain World*, October 6 1938, p. 10. A poll found then that seventy-two percent of opinion favored increased expenditures on armaments. "The British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

While the Government promised to correct these weaknesses,¹⁹⁹ the Opposition asked what had become of that "almost terrifying power that Britain is building up," and which the Prime Minister had spoken of in the previous March and which he had told the House was having "a sobering effect on the opinion of the world."²⁰⁰

However, again in the Munich debate, Mr. Chamberlain gave the House a solemn assurance that there would be no relaxation of rearmament as a result of the Munich Agreement. It was noted that he did not appear to appreciate the gravity of the situation in Europe or at least he gave no indication of it, but then, neither did the majority of opinion realize the danger. Only once during the debate on Munich did Mr. Chamberlain strike a note of warning and even this was very mild. He stated that "it is possible that we may want great efforts from the nation in the months that are to come, and if that be so, the smaller our differences the better."²⁰¹

While pledging the Government, then, to greater efforts on rearmament which satisfied somewhat part of opinion, at the same time, the Prime Minister centered his hopes on the new era which he hoped the Munich meeting had brought into European relations. He told the House that,

. . . Ever since I assumed my present office, my main purpose has been to work for the pacification of Europe, for the removal of those suspicions and those anxieties which have so long poisoned the air. The path which leads to appeasement is long and bristles with obstacles . . . Now that we have got past it, I feel that it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity.²⁰²

While this pleased some opinion, mostly opinion within his own party, others who heard these words felt that to "get past" those obstacles on the road to appeasement, Britain had been forced to approve numerous acts of aggression and treaty violations by both Germany and Italy.²⁰³ And

¹⁹⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 214. See also "After Munich," *The Christain World*, October 13, 1938, p. 10.

²⁰⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 247. The DNB correspondent in London reported that no member of the Government or of the Government party gave the German danger or German hostility as the reason for rearmament, but that this was done by the Opposition and its press, namely, the *Daily Telegraph*. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 256.

²⁰¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 339, October 6, 1938, col. 548. See also "British Policy Now," II, by Sir Arnold Wilson, *The Spectator*, October 28, 1938, pp. 703-4. The Polish Ambassador in London noted on this line that British opinion at last realized with satisfaction that the Government's policy did not mean a renunciation of rearmament, but on the contrary, thanks to the Agreement, it was making rearmament possible. *Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, V. II, No. 44.

²⁰² H of C., *Ibid.*, October 3, 1938, col. 448. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 248; Bonnet, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, p. 323-5.

²⁰³ The Labor Party proposed at the time the calling together of an international conference "to deal with the causes of war, the wrongs of Versailles and the minorities, to deal with colonial questions and questions on raw materials . . ." H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 339, October 2, 1938, col. 289. The *Statesman* felt that this would appeal to all parties if a policy of appeasement was to be continued. "The New Europe," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, pp. 516-7. See also "The Critics," *The Christain World*, October 6, 1938, p. 10. However, a poll of opinion in regard to colonies found that of the eighty-five percent who opposed the return of colonies to Germany at this time, seventy-eight percent indicated they would fight for them before handing them back. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

moreover, it was noted, Hitler always assured the world that his ambitions were satisfied after each new aggression. A very small group observed that Mr. Chamberlain continued to trust Germany's promises as indicated by the Prime Minister's statement on the Anglo-German Declaration that,

. . . (It) is something more than a pious expression of opinion. In our relations with other countries everything depends upon there being sincerity and goodwill on both sides. I believe that there is sincerity and good-will on both sides in this declaration.²⁰⁴

The Prime Minister, in closing the debate, charted the course of his policy in the months to come and he voiced the hopes of most opinion by observing that

. . . Our policy of appeasement does not mean that we are going to seek new friends at the expense of old ones, or, indeed, at the expense of any other nation at all . . . (our objective) is to obtain the collaboration of all nations, not excluding the totalitarian States, in building up a lasting peace for Europe.^{204a}

Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues had stepped carefully on this issue and his policy was approved by a vote of 366 to 144.²⁰⁵ As previously noted, even with the Eden and Churchill groups abstaining from the vote, Neville Chamberlain had still managed to collect enough Labor, Liberal and Independent votes to give his Government and his policy a convincing majority. Outside of the actual leaders of all parties, the rank and file for the most part were still content to back Mr. Chamberlain and his policy of appeasement as opposed to any other policy which might have resulted in war.²⁰⁶

OPINION IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

The Munich debate in the House of Lords was in sharp contrast to that in the lower House. While there were a few speeches highly critical of the Munich terms, there was no counterpart to the attacks on Mr. Chamberlain that took place in the House of Commons. Most of the speakers in the upper House were men of wide experience in the Government and foreign affairs and for the most part, they supported the Government's case.

²⁰⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, October 6, 1938, col. 696. Opinion did not appear to agree with him on this as indicated by a poll which found that ninety-three percent did not believe Hitler words. "The British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82. See also Bonnet, *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay*, p. 336.

^{204a} H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 689, and Zilliacus, *Between Two Wars*, pp. 199-200.

²⁰⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 698. It was noted that under the stern discipline of Whips, Tory members listened uneasily while experts on foreign affairs denounced the policy for which they as party men were bound to vote for. "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 8, 1938, pp. 519-20.

²⁰⁶ This was completely reported to Berlin by Ambassador Dirksen. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV., No. 252. The DNB correspondent in London noted that Mr. Chamberlain's popularity appeared to gain ground and that his opponents had recently been meeting with serious difficulties in their districts. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV., No. 256.

Lord Halifax, in answering the charges of the non-participation of the Soviets at Munich, repeated what he had told the Soviet Ambassador earlier and that was

. . . We were obliged to recognize that in the present circumstances, the heads of the German and Italian Government would . . . be reluctant to sit in conference with a Soviet representative. But that in no way signified any weakening of the desire on our part . . . to preserve our understanding and relations with the Soviet Government.²⁰⁷

And he had this to say of the Prime Minister,

. . . What I think the world can never measure was the almost unbearable weight that rested personally and alone upon his shoulders. That no colleague could share, and for the manner in with, he bore it no thanks of his fellow-men can be too great . . .²⁰⁸

While Lord Newton felt humiliated in that Hitler had got what he wanted,²⁰⁹ Lord Leytton went on the record as being more profoundly distressed about the Munich settlement than he had ever been about any event in British foreign policy.²¹⁰ Lord Snell, leader of the Labor Opposition in the upper House, remarked that behind the sense of deliverance there was a deep sense of misgiving,²¹¹ and Lord Stonehaven felt that it was a case of the mistake of Versailles coming home to rest.²¹²

The old-timer, Lord Samuel, speaking as a member who had been in the British Cabinet when World War I broke out, stated that "we are thankful for the happier ending of the crisis now,"²¹³ while another veteran, Lord Gainford rejoiced that the world had been saved from an overwhelming disaster as a result of Munich.²¹⁴

A significant reference to the League of Nations was made by Lord Crewe. He felt that posterity would be disposed to blame the League for having paid attention exclusively to the penalties which could be exacted from those who made war rather than giving its time and attention to removing the causes of war. He concluded his statement with the thought that the name of Hitler "might never have been heard of if a different course had been taken at Geneva."²¹⁵

Lord Baldwin, making his maiden speech in the upper House, rendered his whole-hearted support to Neville Chamberlain and the policy of appeasement. He believed that no Prime Minister could have committed

²⁰⁷ H of L, *Parl. Deb.* V, 110, October 3, 1938, col. 208.

²⁰⁸ H of L, *Parl. Deb.*, V, 110, October 3, 1938, col. 255. See also the speech by Lord Halifax at Edinburgh, October 24, 1938. *The Times*, October 25, 1938. "The Vital Issues," *The Spectator*, October 28, 1938, pp. 700-1.

²⁰⁹ H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 268. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V, IV, No. 251.

²¹⁰ H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 249.

²¹¹ H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 276.

²¹² H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 289.

²¹³ H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 277-8.

²¹⁴ H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 283. Also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V, IV, No. 248.

²¹⁵ H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 304.

Britain to war if he was convinced that the country was not ready for war. He answered the charge that there was "something unclean in having to face discussions with a dictator" by asking the critics of the Prime Minister if they realized the great difficulty during the preceding five years of getting in contact with the dictators.²¹⁶

Two distinguished military men came out strongly in support of Neville Chamberlain. Lord Chatfield stressed the impossibility of giving effectual aid to the Czechs in time when he observed that "what is the good of saying to a man in the lion's den: 'Never mind if he does eat you up, I am going to stop his rations for the future!'"²¹⁷ A strong supporter of the air forces, Lord Trenchard, remarked that even if the settlement was only temporary, the Agreement gave the country time for reflection before the terrible weapon of air power could be brought into use.²¹⁸

Thus for the time, opinion generally was content to let the Prime Minister pursue his policy in the hope that further aggression would be halted and that Britain, at any rate, could stay out of war.

²¹⁶ H of L., Parl. Deb., V 110, October 3, 1939, col. 316. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 256.

²¹⁷ H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 314.

²¹⁸ H of L, *Ibid.*, col. 219.

CHAPTER VIII

POST MUNICH OPINION

With the events of the Munich crisis moving further into the past, British opinion began to settle down and relax again. Mobilisation was halted and military reserves returned home. Preparations for civilian air defense ended. The British press was no longer concerned with the nation's war preparations, but followed the organization of the British legion of volunteers for police duties in the plebiscite districts of Czechoslovakia. However the plebiscite was never held.²¹⁹

President Benes resigned October 5th and the demoralisation of the Prague Government followed rapidly. British opinion saw signs of Nazi pressure on Prague when the Government there ordered the dissolution of the Communist Party and Czechoslovakia's withdrawal from the Russian agreement.²²⁰ And then followed Ruthenia's action on a declaration of independence.²²¹

It was at this time that Hitler toured the Sudetenland and boasted of Germany's victory,²²² while in Britain, the problem of the Czech refugees was of the deepest concern to opinion. Groups were formed to aid in the collection of funds to assist these refugees.²²³ And *The Times* carried such articles as "The Drive for Peace," which explained what the aims of the Chamberlain policy were and a discussion of the separate points of criticism of that policy.²²⁴

Late in November, Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax visited Paris to resume their consultations with the French. They were very cordially welcomed by the people of France.²²⁵ Meanwhile Hitler had given no indication

²¹⁹ *The Times*, October 5, 1938.

²²⁰ *The Times*, October 14, 1938. Hitler, in a speech at Saarbrücken on October 9th, had made his first attack on Churchill, Eden and Duff Cooper. Ambassador Dirksen noted that this made Mr. Chamberlain's position more difficult simply because public opinion in Britain had always been inclined to protect its fellow countrymen, regardless of party, if attacked by a foreigner. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 250.

²²¹ *Daily Telegraph*, October 12, 1938.

²²² *The Times*, October 18, 1938.

²²³ *The Times*, October 26, 1938. The fact that there were refugees undoubtedly had some influence on the feelings of opinion toward Hitler.

²²⁴ "The for Peace," *The Times*, October 19, 1938; *The Times*, October 22, 1938; *Daily Telegraph*, October 22, 1938; *Manchester Guardian*, October 25, 1938; *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 275; Flandin, *Politique Française*, p. 295.

²²⁵ "The Drive for Peace," *The Times*, October 19, 1938; *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 258. The official French documents for the period are found in *La Livre Jaune Français, Documents Diplomatiques 1938-39*. The events at Munich had left France in a state of political disunity and moral collapse and the cry was "rather Hitler than Stalin," with the exception of the extreme Left.

that he remembered the agreement signed at Munich and the German press continued to attack British policy and particular British public figures as "war-mongers."²²⁶

Parliament assembled November 1st and public feeling in Britain was immediately indicated by the fact that the Government's foreign policy was attacked from all sides in both Houses. The Munich Agreement was particularly singled out for criticism and there were fewer compliments paid to the Prime Minister for his role as peacemaker.

Government supporters appeared to feel that the less said about Munich the better their position would be in the eyes of opinion.²²⁷ On the other side of the House of Commons, however, bitter things were said of the Agreement. When Sir Archibald Sinclair denounced the Government's policy as one of "scuttle and defeatism,"²²⁸ Neville Chamberlain retorted that he not only continued to have confidence in Hitler's good faith regarding the Munich Agreement and the Anglo-German Declaration, but that criticism of the recent events was equivalent to a bird fouling its own nest.²²⁹ This was during a period when Hitler was continuing to attack Mr. Churchill, Mr. Eden, Duff Cooper, Arthur Greenwood and Mr. Atlee as war-mongers.²³⁰

Once again the demand was heard that Russia be brought into an alliance with Britain. For example, on November 9th in the House of Lords, Lloyd George, while asking the Government to take the House and the British people into its confidence, asserted that any plan for European peace must include Russia.²³¹

In spite of the tension existing in Europe, the Government was riding on its popularity and from the record, appear to have made little if any,

²²⁶ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 11, 1938, p. 793.

²²⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 340, November 2, 1938, col. 305. See also "Post Munich Policy," *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938 pp. 756-57; "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 29, 1938, pp. 678-9; Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, pp. 296-7.

²²⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 170-1. Two Tories, General Spears and Mr. V. Adams, seized the chance to place on record their mistrust of the Government's foreign policy. H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 205, 219-20.

²²⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 340, November 1, 1938, col. 74, 88. This statement caused resentment because it was so much like the Fascist methods where all criticism was barred. H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 92. See also "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938, p. 758.

²³⁰ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 11, 1938, pp. 793-4. The German Ambassador to Britain was informed by Berlin that these attacks were part of a continuing Germany policy. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 264.

²³¹ H of C., *op. cit.*, November 9, 1938, col. 1407. Sir Norman Angell was an example of those who urged an alliance with Russia. See "British Policy Now," V. *The Spectator*, November 11, 1938, pp. 800-1. The Polish Ambassador in London noted that . . . notwithstanding all the talk of the active elements of the opposition, a conflict in Eastern Europe which threatens in one way or another to embroil German and Russia is universally regarded here as a "lessor evil," capable of deferring the menace to the Empire . . . *Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, V. I, No. 44.

attempt to warn the people what to expect in the future.²³² While the Government stood fast on the certainty of success of its appeasement policy, the Opposition could not muster enough strength to turn the Government out of office.²³³ For example, early in November, the popularity of the Government in the country was shown by the rejection in the House of a Labor motion condemning the Government for its "admitted unpreparedness" by a vote of three hundred and forty-five to one hundred and thirty-eight. This was still a sizeable majority.²³⁴

ITALIAN APPEASEMENT ONCE AGAIN

Appeasement toward Italy came up again with the Government's announcement that the Anglo-Italian Agreement would be brought into force.²³⁵ Although the Agreement had been signed six months previously, it had remained inoperative until certain conditions had been fulfilled by Italy. Early in November, 1938, the Government informed the House that Italy had agreed to withdraw half of her troops in Spain and the remainder when the latest nonintervention plan came into operation.²³⁶ Thereupon, Neville Chamberlain took this opportunity to announce that it was the proper time for a further step forward in the policy of appeasement by bringing the Italian Agreement into effect. And although the Government's proposal was carried by a majority of over two hundred votes, there was strong opposition to it from the non-appeasement part of opinion.²³⁷

While there had long been a considerable body of opinion that opposed the Government's Spanish policy, this group appeared to be much stronger

²³² Late in October, the Archbishop of Canterbury warned the nation of a reaction following the relief felt at Munich. *The Times*, October 18, 1938; "Organise or Compel," *The Spectator*, October 21, 1938, pp. 640-1; *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V, IV, No. 260.

²³³ The Oxford and the Dartford by-elections in November indicated that while the Tory candidates won as they had in 1935, their majorities were almost non-existent, pointing to dissatisfaction with the Tory policies. "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 11, 1938, p. 795.

²³⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V 340, November 2, 1938, col. 332. One observer noted that there had never been any previous time when British parties had so little represented the true cleavage of opinion. There were many divisions beneath the surface, but the real issue was between those who were satisfied with the Tories and those who were not and that the Labor Manifesto, however good, was not a substitute for the National Opposition which opinion was ready for. "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, October 29, 1938, pp. 678-9.

²³⁵ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938, p. 753.

²³⁶ Earlier, Count Grandi had told the Germans that Italy was interested in strengthening Mr. Chamberlain's position in order to prevent Mr. Eden from returning or filling the Foreign Secretary post with someone similar and for reasons of internal policy as it was important for Mr. Chamberlain to show an early success. Italy was basically inclined to cooperate with the British in the Non-Intervention Committee. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V, III, No. 602.

²³⁷ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V 340, November 2, 1938, col. 332. See also "Britain and France," *The Christain World*, November 8, 1938, p. 8. *The Manchester Guardian* was critical of Lord Halifax's admission in the House of Lords that not only was Britain ignoring outrages on public law committed by Italian troops in Spain, but was turning around and making an agreement with Italy. This paper concluded this was the most complete vindication of Mr. Eden's resignation. *The Manchester Guardian*, November 7, 1938. See also Werth, *France and Munich*, pp. 396-7.

in 1938.²³⁸ As previously noted, various groups had long attempted to influence the Government's policy in Spain. A few months previously, a powerful conference was held in Queen's Hall, attended by leading Socialists, Liberals and Left-Wing Conservatives, for the purpose of finding ways and means of pressuring the government into granting belligerent rights to the Spanish Government. However, there were numerous factions within the Conference, for even the Labor Party was split on the Spanish issue. This had remained true and it was for these reasons that no effective body of opinion could be brought to bear on the Government.²³⁹

The fact remains that the debates in Parliament during this period indicated that opposition in general to the Government's overall foreign policy was increasing. Opinion was becoming more and more aware of the probable results of a foreign policy which offered concessions to all aggressors.²⁴⁰ The record for the period indicates that there were twenty-four debates on foreign policy alone in the first six months of 1938, and in addition, there were more than fourteen hundred questions on foreign affairs put to the Government during the same period. Many of these concerned the policy on Spain.

Those who saw the dangers of further aggression in Europe were only interested in the defeat of the France forces, while those who supported non-intervention hoped to prevent a local war from becoming a world war.²⁴¹

OPINION MOUNTS AGAINST GERMANY

Bitterness about the Spanish war increased the opposition to the Government's foreign policy in other fields. This combined with Hitler's more recent actions brought about a dangerous upsurge of disfavorable opinion

²³⁸ It was again called a "one-sided" agreement by part of the press. See "Relations with Italy," *The Spectator*, November 18, 1938, pp. 833-4; "Mr. Chamberlain's Policy," *The New Statesman and Nation*, July 9, 1938, pp. 64-5. The German Ambassador in London noted in July that the agreement reached in the Non-Intervention Committee on the combining-out plan for Spain was considered by the great majority of the British public a success for Mr. Chamberlain and this success helped ease his position in the British Parliament because the course of British domestic politics had recently been determined more and more by international developments and that since Mr. Eden's resignation, the pressure on the Government for any success in foreign policy had been great and probably necessary if Neville Chamberlain wished to continue in office. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 637.

²³⁹ "Labor and the Popular Front," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 23, 1938, pp. 677-8; "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938, p. 755.

²⁴⁰ The political reporter for *The Spectator* accurately noted that at no time since the summer of 1931 had the immediate political outlook been so uncertain and that the extent and volume of discontent among the supporters of the Government were greater than they had ever been during the life-time of the Government in office. "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, November 18, 1938, p. 823.

²⁴¹ "Mr. Chamberlain's Policy," *The New Statesman and Nation*, July 16, 1938, pp. 64-5; "The Churches and the Crisis," *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938, pp. 757-8. The German Embassy in London reported that the basic differences in British opinion on the Spanish question were that on one hand, there was the Prime Minister, who had not closed his eyes to the actual facts and on the other hand, the Eden and Churchill groups, who were bound by a rigid "moral principle" and were willing to go to extremes for the sake of this principle. The Germans further noted that the opposition parties considered the Spanish issue an especially suitable platform for attacking not only the Government but Italy and Germany as well. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. III, No. 637.

in Britain.²⁴² Up to and including the Munich Conference, Britain's attitude to the problems of Czechoslovakia was approved by a great majority of Britons. Opinion felt that the only alternative was war and the public did not believe that the issues up to that time warranted that extreme risk.²⁴³ After Munich, this remained true and nothing up to this point had happened that greatly weakened the Government's case in the eyes of opinion.²⁴⁴

However an increasing part of opinion began hating Hitler and all he represented. This probably accounts for the fact that Germany's colonial claims, made after the Munich settlement, received little consideration in Britain. Those who believed that Germany should have a better opportunity for access to colonies believed the solution would have been to internationalize the colonies rather than to hand them back to Germany.²⁴⁵ It has been noted that eighty-five percent of opinion in Britain opposed this.²⁴⁶

Typical of the change in opinion regarding this question was the view expressed by the Marquess of Londonderry. While speaking at the Overseas League late in 1938, he noted that

... at this time we cannot in any circumstances hand over any populations which look to us for protection and guidance to the tender mercies of a country which seems disposed either to exterminate a section of its population or to allow them to live in conditions of such a barbarous character.²⁴⁷

Such a statement from the spokesman cited above was indicative of the change that had taken place within a considerable part of opinion in Britain, while only a short while previously, these same people had been favorably inclined toward Germany on this question.

This change was aided to a great extent by an incident that occurred during November. A Polish Jew shot a member of the German Embassy staff in Paris and this set off a pogrom against the Jews in Germany. Such treatment of the Jews had never before been so ruthless in the eyes of

²⁴² "Portugal's Dilemma," *The New Statesman and Nation*, July 23, 1938, p. 138.

²⁴³ Mr. Spender, while calling for appeasement, noted that the recent crisis had demonstrated the profound aversion of war by British opinion. "British Opinion," VI, *The Spectator*, November 18, 1938, p. 839.

²⁴⁴ "Post Munich Policy," *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938, pp. 756-7.

²⁴⁵ Michael Huxley, "A New Deal for Africa," *The Spectator*, November 25, 1939, pp. 895-6. Mr. Oswald Lewis shocked the House by favoring the return of German colonies. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 340, November 2, 1938, col. 340. Most of the press, like the polls, doubted that opinion backed this view. "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 4, 1938, p. 175. See also *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 269.

²⁴⁶ However when Hitler seized Prague, opinion shifted so that only seventy-eight percent disapproved the return of colonies and sixty-nine would have fought to keep them. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, op. 77-82.

²⁴⁷ *The Times*, December 14, 1938. See also "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, December 16, 1938, p. 1036.

opinion throughout the world. Prime Minister Chamberlain shared the public's indignation, but did not take any formal action.²⁴⁸

As far as Britain was concerned, world reaction was normal. For example, the reaction of the United States was normal. While the American President joined in the protest and withdrew the American Ambassador from Berlin "for consultation" and the country at large demanded a boycott of German goods, no action was taken to stop the Germans. Even those who demonstrated the hopelessness of relying on Britain and France to check Hitler, for the most part avoided any suggestion that the United States assume any part of that assignment in halting Hitler. And according to the Gallup polls, about ninety-five percent of the population was opposed to American participation in another war, while two-thirds of those consulted professed to favor a policy of refusing to sell munitions and war material to either side.²⁴⁹ Thus the mentality of "drifting isolationism" was clearly as strong as ever, and it appears probable that the worse the situation became in Europe, the more determined the American people were to stay out of it. This attitude was not without an adverse effect on British opinion.

Late in 1938, there was serious consideration by Mr. Chamberlain for calling a new national election based on his foreign policy. He believed that there was a misconception by the Opposition of his strength with the rank and file of the British people. From the record, there appears to be little doubt that his party would not have been returned to office. While the Government desired such an empathic mandate for its foreign policy, the suggestion was dropped when Mr. Chamberlain considered the bitter campaign controversies and the added difficulties of peaceful negotiations with other European countries which an election would breed.²⁵⁰

The danger of war again became the main consideration of opinion in Britain. The Prime Minister continued his policy and he repeated again that he could not take any responsibility for war unless he could say that he had done everything in his power to prevent war. British opinion shared his belief and continued to support his efforts along these lines.

²⁴⁸ A Double Tragedy," *The Christain World*, November 17, 1938, p. 2; "The New Barbarism," *The Spectator*, November 18, 1938, pp. 836-7. It was not surprising to note the results of a poll at this time which found sixty-five percent of opinion choosing Russia as the favorite to win in a war between Russia and Germany, while only eleven percent picked Germany. "The British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82. Further to the point, Ambassador Dirksen noted the effect of this incident on British opinion and added in his report that as a result of this incident, Mr. Chamberlain became more than ever the main target for attacks by the Opposition. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. VI, No. 269.

²⁴⁹ For an analysis of American reaction to events in Europe, see Philip E. Jacobs, "Influences of World Events on US 'Neutrality' Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940.

²⁵⁰ "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, November 11, 1938, p. 795. Strangely enough, Ribbentrop reported that Mr. Pirow, the South African War Minister, told him that Mr. Chamberlain's position was not strong and that the Prime Minister would lose his majority at the next by-election if his policy of rapprochement should prove unsuccessful. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. VI, No. 270. However, a poll indicated at this time that fifty-six percent of opinion favored Mr. Chamberlain. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

Mr. Chamberlain had assured an audience at Guildhall the day before the pogrom in Germany that "Europe is settling down to a more peaceful state."²⁵¹ A few days later at a dinner sponsored by the Foreign Press Association, he denounced criticisms of Munich as "no service to democracy or to the chances of further international cooperation."²⁵² And he persisted in the belief that the Munich Agreement would avoid the necessity of ever having war between Germany and Britain. By this time he had ceased saying much about the Munich Pact itself which indicated that he was aware of public feeling on the issue, but he continued to laud the Declaration itself. He assured the House of Commons that

... When I signed it I meant what was in that document and I am convinced that Herr Hitler meant it too when he signed it.²⁵³

It was at this time that the Prime Minister found himself confronted with a situation within his own organization similar to that immediately after the Munich crisis which resulted in the resignation of Duff Cooper. Three junior ministers, after considerable soul-searching, informed the Prime Minister that they did not agree with the composition of the Cabinet and that unless there were some immediate changes, they would resign. The result was that there were some changes and two of the rebel ministers remained in office. It indicated that Neville Chamberlain was facing increasing trouble and was endeavoring to avoid a serious split within his own party.²⁵⁴

Meanwhile the attitude of other nations was probably influencing Mr. Chamberlain more than British opinion. For example, on October 3, 1938, the comments of M. Daladier were conveyed to President Roosevelt. The French Premier expressed the fear that Mr. Chamberlain had been taken in by Hitler and confessed that he had not the slightest bit of confidence in any German promise. He believed that within six months Britain and France would be confronted with new German demands and remarked "that in his opinion the single thing which counted today was not the diplomatic negotiations but the strengthening of the military forces of France, especially in the field of air armament." This view was shortly strengthened by Hitler's speech in which he called for additional German armaments on the ground that Mr. Chamberlain's promises were not worth anything because he might at any time be replaced by new men like Winston Churchill and Duff Cooper.

²⁵¹ *The Times*, November 14, 1938.

²⁵² *The Times*, December 14, 1938. At this time, Mr. Chamberlain defended Lord Baldwin who had been criticised by Germany for his remarks of the pogrom. As a result, no Germans attended the dinner, which may account for the attention given to the incident by the press. Mr. Chamberlain implied that if a demand was reasonable, it did not become unreasonable even if supported by the threat of force. This aroused speculation that the Prime Minister contemplated the granting of belligerent rights to Franco. "Mr. Chamberlain's Next Step," *The Spectator*, December 16, 1938, pp. 1034-5.

²⁵³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 340, November 2, 1938, col. 376. Ambassador Dirksen reported that Neville Chamberlain's position since Munich had been greatly weakened and that how long he could keep his place in the Government was a question about which the German Ambassador was by no means so confident as he had been a month or two before. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 281.

²⁵⁴ *The Times*, November 18, 1938.

Mr. Roosevelt at once announced an increase of American armaments for the purpose of national defense and to soften the blow on American opinion, he signified his intention of concentrating on hemisphere defense. From this time on, the American President began to evolve plans for a huge air force and above all, the development of American plane-production facilities.²⁵⁵

The question has often been raised and debated, and the British asked the same thing themselves, why, if President Roosevelt was aware of the danger inherent in the European situation after Munich, he did not state them publicly and call into use his tremendous influence and prestige to induce a change in American opinion. The answer was not a simple one, as the British discovered, and it had at least a number of different facets. For one thing, it is almost certain that if the American President and his advisors recognized the threat of war in Europe and discerned its probable repercussions on American opinion, they had at most only the vaguest notion that the country might eventually have to intervene by force of arms. They clearly hoped that, in the long run, Britain and France would be able to defeat their opponents, especially if they could draw on American material aid. The immediate need, then, seemed less for a reversal of the established attitude than for a modification of it in the sense of converting it to a stronger American initiative in an effort to prevent war in Europe and to win approval of a policy of aiding the European nations of the West in preparation for hostilities. Mr. Roosevelt apparently hoped to accomplish this without provoking too much public controversy, the avoidance of which seemed to him at the time absolutely essential when it is remembered that his political position in late 1938 was probably weaker than it had ever been and he was not prepared for a major controversy on foreign policy.²⁵⁶

BRITISH OPINION APPREHENSIVE

On December 18, 1938, a major foreign policy debate was held in Parliament, as a result of the fear of war by opinion. The debate, although called by some a waste of time, was valuable in that it indicated that the whole electorate had become more concerned over the international situation. In addition, opinion was overly concerned because of the fact that Parliament was going into recess for a period and from past experience had indicated that most of the recent crises had occurred when Parliament was not in session.²⁵⁷ It was noted that it was only natural that the Opposition desired to know what policy the Government would follow while Parliament was in recess.²⁵⁸ Hugh Dalton's main point was the fact

²⁵⁵ *New York Times*, October 12, 1938.

²⁵⁶ This side of the problem is discussed ably and at much greater length by Basil Rauch, *Roosevelt, from Munich to Pearl Harbor*, Ch. 4.

²⁵⁷ "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, December 23, 1938, p. 1077.

²⁵⁸ *H of C., Parl. Deb.*, V. 341, December 18, 1938, col. 711. The German Minister to Eire reported that Prime Minister DeValera saw British opinion as feeling that Munich had represented a political defeat for Britain and that a repetition of Munich would be impossible insofar as opinion would accept it. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 285.

that Britain had experienced a continuous decline in power and influence in European affairs during the previous seven years since the advent of the appeasement policy.²⁵⁹

Sir Arthur Sinclair made very effective use of quotations from *Mein Kampf*,²⁶⁰ while Lloyd George was scathing in regard to Neville Chamberlain's abilities as a sprinter.²⁶¹ On the other hand, Sir John Simon was just as effective in supporting the Government's case and while not directly answering the charges thrown at the Government that Britain should never have arrived at a position which made such a policy necessary, he stated only that "the first reason why we may defend the Munich Agreement is that it was right."²⁶²

In spite of the fact that a growing number of people of Britain disliked the Munich Pact, Mr. Dalton's motion of censure on the Government's foreign policy was defeated in the House.²⁶³ But opinion was definitely taking a stand on either side of the issue. There were few middle-of-the-roads left. The real dividing line was that line which separated those who had given up all hope except in the threat of force and those who supported Mr. Chamberlain in his firm resolution to go to the last limit of patience and positive effort to save Europe from war.²⁶⁴

With the end of the year in sight, a majority of opinion still sided with the Prime Minister and his policy. His statement in the House wherein he took the opportunity of asking the rulers of Germany and Italy to state openly whether they were prepared to aid in the quest for European peace was universally well received by all opinion in Britain.²⁶⁵ Opinion thus expressed itself or that note of interrogation, and while thankful that no war had yet come, there was grave apprehension about the future.²⁶⁶

²⁵⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 804-5.

²⁶⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 799.

²⁶¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 843.

²⁶² H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 877.

²⁶³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 891-2.

²⁶⁴ "Patience or Weakness" *The Christian World*, December 22, 1938, p. 8. Late in 1938, several books appeared which were indicative of the several different factions supporting Mr. Chamberlain. See K. B. Mowat, *Peace in Sight* (1938); George Pitt-Rivers, *Czech Conspiracy* (1938); and John Scanlon, *Very Foreign Affairs* (1938). Meanwhile the announced visit of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax to Rome caused France and Foreign Minister Bonnet to conclude a Franco-German Declaration of Friendship and France worked for the abrogation of the Soviet and Polish alliances. France was worried about Italy and hoped that Germany would side with her and not Italy. Werth, *France and Munich*, pp. 329-30.

²⁶⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 341, December 18, 1938, col. 745. See also "News of the Week," *The Spectator*, December 23, 1938, p. 1075.

²⁶⁶ Foreign policy was the issue in the by-election at Perth. There the Duchess of Atholl, already with the Opposition, was defeated by a lesser opponent even though she and the Government had won in 1935. It represented a remarkable victory for Mr. Chamberlain. See "Aspects of Parliament," *The Spectator*, December 30, 1938, p. 1109. The Polish Ambassador in London collaborated this when he noted that opinion realized that Munich was the only way out of a desperate situation and that Mr. Chamberlain, in spite of failures, remained a "force" in Britain. *Documents Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, V. I, No. 44. Also a poll found that while nineteen percent of opinion said they had volunteered for national service, eighty-one percent said no and when asked if they intended to volunteer, thirty-seven percent said no, and thirty-four percent were undecided and only twenty-nine percent answered yes. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

PART III

ENDING OF APPEASEMENT

CHAPTER IX

PRAGUE SHOCKS OPINION

On January 4, 1939, President Roosevelt told the United States Congress that in spite of the fact that a world war had been averted, peace was by no means assured.¹ The world in the early part of 1939 was a troubled one. Civil war continued to embroil Spain and the war in China continued unabated. Germany was rapidly expanding her armed forces to the deep concern of British opinion.² In addition, Britain could not spare enough of her naval might to protect British interests adequately in the Far East. All in all, the year opened dismally in the eyes of not only British opinion, but in the eyes of all free opinion.

OPPOSITION OPINION GROWS STRONGER

In Europe, the most important event in the early days of 1939 was the visit of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax to Rome for talks with the Italian Government.³ It had been carefully announced that no definite program for the talks had been formulated and that no bargaining would be attempted by either side. The Government further explained that such a personal visit would go a long way toward improving relations between Britain and Italy. Under the circumstances, there was an immediate reaction by British opinion. A good many people were positive that there could be no more Munichs. Even a number of Government supporters had doubts

¹ *The New York Times*, January 5, 1939, Mr. Dirksen noted that in recognition of the effect of the President's words on British opinion, Mr. Chamberlain made his well-known statement in agreement and the Ambassador concluded that Mr. Chamberlain obviously took the view that in any case little damage could be done to Anglo-German relations and that as a result Neville Chamberlain had gained popularity. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 291.

² In articles entitled "1939-What Does It Hold? A Forecast," in the *News Chronicle*, January 2 and 3, 1939, H. C. Wells described Hitler, Goring and Goebbels as "certified lunatics." This was the subject of a strong protest to Lord Halifax by Mr. Dirksen. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 290 and No. 300.

³ "The Road to Rome," *The Spectator*, January 6, 1939, pp. 4-5; "Mr. Chamberlain et Lord Halifax a Rome," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, January 7, 1939, p. 20. One paper commented: "... if Great Britain and her peace-loving neighbors persist courageously with their policy of appeasement . . . the New Year may yet see a return to a measure of sanity and stability. 'The European Prospect,'" *The Christain World*, January 5, 1939, p. 10.

regarding the wisdom of such a mission and for a time the entire issue threatened to seriously split the Government ranks.⁴

The maintenance of peace, as previously indicated, had been received with heartfelt gratitude by British opinion, but the particular means chosen to preserve the peace, the Munich Agreement, was resented. This feeling cut across party lines and caused unrest over British policy even among Conservatives.⁵ Harold Nicolson noted that British opinion was feeling gloomily resolute and that their mood was one of anxious, even stained perplexity.⁶ But again no leader appeared on the scene to weld the dissentients within the Conservative Party into an active opposition. Neither Anthony Eden nor Winston Churchill appealed to the discontented and even the much discussed private meeting early in January, organized by Duncan Sandys and other party leaders, failed to reach common agreement, although it was indicative of the growing strength of the opposition to the policy of appeasement.⁷

Prime Minister Chamberlain had two things in mind when he went to Rome. One was the position in the Mediterranean which was of vital importance to Britain's supply lines and the other was the possible ending of

⁴ *The Times*, January 10, 1939; "Chamberlain and Rome," *The Spectator*, December 2, 1938, p. 931. One view noted that there could be no British appeasement in view of Mr. Chamberlain's speech on December 18th when he declared that so long as there were foreign troops in Spain and so long as no other solution had been found but that which involved the Non-Intervention Plan, Britain did not intend to grant belligerent rights not in accordance with the Plan itself. "Chamberlain and Spain," *The New Statesman and Nation*, January 7, 1939, p. 1.

⁵ On January 31, Hitler had again attacked certain British figures and Sir Archibald Sinclair commented in the House on this by noting that the men attacked by Hitler appeared to have less chance of inclusion in the Cabinet. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 344, February 1, 1939, col. 543. It was noted that this point could not be over-emphasized. "Herr Hitler's Meaning," *The Spectator*, February 13, 1939, pp. 164-5. Ambassador Dirksen at the time attributed this swing of opinion to three things: Certain features of the anti-Jewish agitation in Germany; the fact that the numerous friendly speeches by Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues, intended for Germany, had met with no response from Germany; and finally, the German press campaign against the British troops in Palestine. He concluded that the unsympathetic attitude of opinion towards Germany was not yet so general or so strong as to make impossible any further attempts by Mr. Chamberlain to reach agreement with Germany on outstanding issues. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 286.

⁶ "People and Things," Harold Nicolson, *The Spectator*, February 3, 1939, p. 175. This was the first of a weekly series of articles by Mr. Nicolson in which he commented on opinion in regard to current questions of foreign policy. His observations on the whole appeared to gauge opinion moderately accurately.

⁷ "Opposition Grows," *The Economist*, January 7, 1939, p. 8. "Versailles to Munich," *Public Politics Pamphlet* 28, p. 53. A poll found that while twenty-eight percent of opinion felt that Mr. Chamberlain's policy would lead to enduring peace and twenty-four percent thought it was bringing war closer, forty-six percent believed it was giving Britain time to rearm. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82. Even at the Peace Petition Conference of 1939, the appeasement policy was dropped as a way to peace. *The Christian World*, January 5, 1939, p. 5. At this time, the *Telegraph* was attacking the work of the League of Nations while *The Times* was fairer toward the League. *The Daily Telegraph*, January 17, 1939; *The Times*, January 18, 1939. See also "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, January 20, 1939, pp. 78-9.

the Spanish war.⁸ Mr. Chamberlain explained that he felt that the time had come for an armistic and that the desired Italian cooperation in arranging an end to hostilities in Spain had been offered. Later events destroyed this hope because the Franco forces were then fighting successfully for Catalonia.⁹

Little if anything was accomplished at Rome and Mr. Chamberlain appeared to actually gain popularity because he had not given anything away to the Italians. Furthermore, he appeared to have made it clear that only an Italian policy of peace with France would have been compatible with any appeasement between Britain and Italy.¹⁰ However, *The Economist* pointed out with some foresight that

The conversations at Rome have changed little or nothing. They have certainly done nothing to diminish the likelihood that, before long, the Western Powers will have to face another aggressive demand from both Axis Powers backed by the threat of their totalitarian force.¹¹

When Parliament assembled late in January for the first time in the New Year, there was an immediate demand for a debate on foreign policy.¹² Mr. Chamberlain's statement on the progress of the conversations in Rome was well received in the House of Commons. The debate then turned to Spain and again the considerable interest of opinion was indicated by the course of discussions in the lower House.¹³

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S POPULARITY RISES

During the early part of 1939, Neville Chamberlain strengthened his hold on opinion. During February, the Prime Minister improved his position even more with his statement that the next move in the process of ap-

⁸ *The Times*, January 23, 1939. On January 8, there was a memorial meeting for the British dead in Spain which was attended by twelve thousand people yet three daily papers, *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Daily Mail*, which had long boasted of their complete coverage of news, completely ignored mention of the meeting. This self-imposed censorship was felt to be harmful to the interests of informing public opinion by a section of the press. See "The International Brigade," *The New Statesman and Nation*, January 14, 1939, p. 53.

⁹ Neville Chamberlain, *Struggle for Peace*, pp. 379-90. Oddly enough, while the editorial policy of *The Christain World* was usually favorably inclined toward the Government, this paper always printed letters from its readers, even when the majority criticised the Government. For correspondence relating to the Rome visit and the Anglo-Italian Declaration of 1938, see *The Christain World*. February 2, 1939, p. 7; May 5, 1939, p. 12; May 12, 1939, p. 5.

¹⁰ "So Oder So," *The New Statesman and Nation*, February 4, 1939, pp. 160-1; "The Fruits of Rome," *The Spectator*, January 20, 1939, pp. 76-7; *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 321.

¹¹ "After Rome," *The Economist*, January 31, 1939, pp. 110.

¹² Ambassador Dirksen noted at the time that Neville Chamberlain's position had suffered various relapses during the preceding few months, largely because of the lack of successful results in improving relations with the totalitarian states and in the near future, he concluded, either Mr. Chamberlain's Cabinet as then constituted would be endangered or it would have to adjust its aims in foreign policy to correspond with those of the majority of the politically minded public and that even Neville Chamberlain, with his extremely forceful character, would not be able to avoid this rule of the democratic game. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 286.

¹³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 344, January 31, 1939, col. 345. See also "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, January 14, 1939, p. 37; "In the House of Commons," *The Economist*, February 4, 1939, p. 239.

peasement would have to be made by the Dictators themselves.¹⁴ But the Government was playing both sides of opinion, as indicated in an appeal to the pacifists in which the Government declared that it still had faith in the dictator's goodwill and, in particular, faith in the claims of both Germany and Italy that neither of those countries had any territorial ambitions in Spain.¹⁵

However, the Government at this time made known its desire to recognize the Franco Government.¹⁶ Harold Nicolson observed that the recognition issue was worth watching in view of the fact that the Government had carried appeasement from Czechoslovakia to Spain and that he, like so many others, wondered what effect this would have on the solidarity of the Conservative Party.¹⁷

In regard to the general international situation, the House and the country were divided roughly into two schools of thought. Both groups realized that in the coming few months, the controversy still raging over the issue triggered by Mr. Eden's resignation would in all probability be settled. One group predicated the result as the immediate expulsion of all Italian troops in Spain by Franco, the disappearance of Italian claims as a result of a united and ever increasing powerful Britain and France, and finally, a change in Germany's temper due to domestic troubles inside that country. This would be the crowning success to Mr. Chamberlain's policy. The other school saw, as later events would prove, that it was only the lull before the storm and that another war or another Munich would be the only result.¹⁸

An obscure incident occurred late in January of 1939 which indicated once more how much influence the United States was exerting on Anglo-French policy and more important, it indicated how the United States was more and more becoming involved in European affairs. On January 23, 1939, the story broke that one of the newest American bombers on a test flight in California had crashed and among those killed in the crash was an official of the French Air Ministry. Thus for the first time the United States Congress and the American people learned that foreigners were being permitted to fly on United States Army aircraft and to acquaint themselves with highly secret equipment. Vigorous protests were lodged at once with the Washington administration, especially by isolationists who thought they detected a secret alliance. On top of this incident, the story leaked out that President Roosevelt, in explaining the crash, stated

¹⁴ *The Times*, February 7, 1939. See speech by Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham, January 30, 1939. *The Times*, January 31, 1939.

¹⁵ "The Next Move in Spain," *The Spectator*, February 10, 1939, pp. 204-5. See also the report by Ambassador Dirksen who, in reporting a discussion with Lord Halifax, noted the increasing anxiety of British opinion which even Hitler's Reichstag speech of January 30 had only temporarily dispelled. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 321.

¹⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 344, February 22, 1939, col. 357-8. *The Times* had indicated this move as early as December of 1938. See also "Kites," by Sagittarius, *The New Statesman and Nation*, January 7, 1939, p. 11.

¹⁷ Harold Nicolson, "People and Things," *The Spectator*, February 17, 1939, p. 239.

¹⁸ "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, February 17, 1939, p. 247.

that he believed the American frontier was on the Rhine. This was vigorously denied later by the American President.

The effect of this unfortunate incident was to throw suspicion on the President's plans and to build up opposition to the projected revision of the American neutrality laws. During the following three months, the United States was embroiled in debate over their neutrality legislation and it was with this in mind that Britain, and France as well, were forced to set their policy with the knowledge that while the United States Government was endeavoring to help the Western democracies, isolationist opinion there would hamper and seriously delay those efforts.

Meanwhile in Britain, on February 27th, there was a full house present to hear Neville Chamberlain's statement on the recognition of Franco.¹⁹ The Opposition parties in the House immediately and vigorously opened the attack on the Government's case. Mr. Attlee ignored both the 'how' and the 'why' of recognition, and primed with M. Daladier's speech in the French Chamber a few days before, he launched an attack on the 'when.' The Prime Minister was clearly unprepared for a charge of misleading the House and in so many words, Mr. Attlee questioned the truthfulness of the Prime Minister.²⁰

The statement that the British Cabinet as a whole had never taken a stand on Franco's recognition came definitely as a surprise to the House and to opinion.²¹ Arthur Henderson, who had asked the question regarding troops in Spain, voiced the real anxiety of opinion by asking just how long all foreign troops were planning to remain in Spain.²² Mr. Eden accurately voiced further concern of opinion by noting that the matter of foreign troops in Spain would be in the public mind as long as such troops were in Spain.²³ However, the Opposition was unable to bring up anything new and was forced to concentrate their efforts on making Mr. Chamberlain appear as the villain of peace.²⁴ But the Government's supporters stood solidly behind the Prime Minister and when Mr. Eden came out for the

¹⁹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 344, February 27, 1939, col. 506. See also "Spain and the World," *The Spectator*, March 3, 1939, pp. 336-7. The Tories suffered from the Government's admission that Italian troops in Libya had been strengthened in spite of the Italian promise in the Anglo-Italian Declaration. The Government could not deny that by that action Mussolini had cancelled one of the few concessions gained by Britain under the Agreement. H of C., *Ibid.*, February 23, 1939, col. 105-6. See also "A Temporary Agreement," *The New Statesman and Nation*, February 25, 1939, p. 270.

²⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, February 27, 1939, col. 601. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, March 3, 1939, p. 335.

²¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 357.

²² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 344, February 27, 1939, col. 379. One paper noted that unconditional recognition would either encourage Franco's supporters, Germany and Italy, or it would convince them of the necessity of striking at once. "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, February 17, 1939, p. 247.

²³ H of C., *Ibid.*, February 28, 1939, col. 911. As late as June, 1939, questions were still being raised in the House regarding the withdrawal of foreign troops from Spain. H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 349, June 26, 1939, col. 7-8.

²⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 344, February 27, 1939, col. 387. The National Council of Labor staged a huge rally on March 1st condemning the Government's Spanish policy. "Labor Rally," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 4, 1939, pp. 314-5.

Government, it was clear that there was not yet a serious split in the Conservative Party.²⁵

The press took the issue in the usual manner and those who had supported the Prime Minister in the past continued to back the Government on this issue.²⁶ A few middle-of-the-road papers indicated some shift of opinion when they warned Britain that in spite of the importance of having Franco's friendship, friendship with the Paris Government was at least as important.²⁷

GERMANY SHOCKS OPINION

Meanwhile, relations with Germany were discouraging. A British Naval Mission was in Berlin discussing the modifications of the Anglo-German ratios in accordance with the New Agreement.²⁸ But there were almost no diplomatic discussions on a high level. Hitler's interests at the time were turned in other directions and the fact that Hitler should suddenly become polite to Britain was a warning to some in Britain that Germany was planning a new move.²⁹

Early in the year Hitler had said that he believed in a long peace between Britain and Germany and that Germany had no intention of infringing on British interests at any point.³⁰ This calmed most opinion in Britain and in spite of the troubled air surrounding Danzig, Polish relations with Germany appeared cordial to Britain.³¹

Meanwhile, Mr. Chamberlain was endeavoring to play down the political tension hanging over Europe, for opinion was once more becoming concerned over the Czech problem. Although it was apparent that Germany was putting pressure on the Prague Government, Mr. Chamberlain attempted to gloss over the danger and reassure opinion.³²

²⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, February 28, 1939, col. 871.

²⁶ "Recognition of Franco," *The Times*, March 1, 1939; "Recognition of Franco," *The Christain World*, March 2, 1939, p. 10. An interesting sidenote on this issue was that during February, a controversy arose in the columns of *The Times* over news reporting by the BBC. While some accused the BBC of only aggravating ill-feeling abroad, others defended it for being only factual. See *The Times*, February 7-25, 1939 and Kingsley Martin, "Public Opinion and the Wireless," *The Political Quarterly*, March 4, 1939, pp. 280-6.

²⁷ "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 4, 1939, p. 309; "Spain and the World," *The Spectator*, March 3, 1939, pp. 336-7.

²⁸ *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 288.

²⁹ Ambassador Dirksen noted the same feeling in Britain by writing that a German expansionist policy in the Ukraine would be welcomed as British opinion thought that in this way Germany's attention would be directed from Western Europe for a long time. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV, No. 287. A poll found that seventy-five percent favored Russia in a war with Germany and twenty-five percent favored Germany. This compares with eighty-five percent and fifteen percent respectively on the same question in December, 1938, two months previously. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

³⁰ *The Times*, January 31, 1939.

³¹ *The Daily Telegraph*, February 3, 1939 and *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV., No. 287.

³² *The Times*, January 29, 1939. It was pointed out that opinion had not forgiven the Munich settlement and that now-five months later, it had aroused what Byron had styled "the Wine of passion-rage." Harold Nicolson, "People and Things," *The Spectator*, March 3, 1939, p. 347.

A few days later Mr. Churchill made it known that he felt that there was insufficient justification for the widespread optimism in Britain which had spread since Hitler's latest speech. While Mr. Churchill was warning the country of the increasing preparations being made in Germany for war,³³ opinion was listening more intently to the "all is well" speeches by various Cabinet members.³⁴

And by the early part of March, most of the British press were printing news which was as optimistic as that given out by various Government spokesmen. For example, on March 10th, every London paper carried the same "optimism" story reproduced with variations, which quoted a prominent Government official on the hopeful outlook of the European situation.³⁵ Yet both the British and French Governments knew of Germany's demands on the Czechs weeks before and what the outcome would be.³⁶

Strangely enough, this relaxation was felt in other Western capitals as well. This was based on the fact that the armaments of the Western Powers were increasing in a seemingly satisfactory manner and that Paris was standing firm in the face of Fascist demands. In the latter regard, it should be remembered that at the turn of the year the agitation in Italy for the retrocession of Nice and Corsica raised the tension in Franco-Italian relations to the point where it appeared more likely that Hitler might try first to provoke a conflict in the Mediterranean, with the objective of engaging the Western Powers and so securing a free hand in the East or possibly settling the score with the democracies before committing himself against Soviet Russia. Since the famous Maginot Line was regarded as almost impregnable, it seemed likely that the Nazi troops would drive through the Low countries or Switzerland. To meet such an eventuality, the British and French had meanwhile promised the Dutch and Swiss support in such a case. However, the Brussels Government, for its part, declined any arrangement that might be interpreted as compromising the absolute neutrality it had proclaimed in 1936.³⁷

³³ W. Churchill, "The Lull in Europe," *Step by Step*, p. 320.

³⁴ H. of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 344, February 28, 1939, col. 1745-7. See also Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich Prologue to Tragedy*, p. 329. The *Statesman*, in attributing the "optimistic" presentation of news in the press to semi-official pressure, urged the BBC to continue its policy of truthfulness. "The Times and the BBC," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 4, 1939, p. 311. German sources reveal that Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, while on an economic mission in Berlin during February, advanced two political feelers, apparently on behalf of Mr. Chamberlain. First, he inquired whether a visit by Sir Horace Wilson, the confidential agent of Mr. Chamberlain, would be welcomed and secondly, whether a *Trenga Dei* between the two nations was possible. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, V. IV., No. 323.

³⁵ *The Times*, March 10, 1939; *Daily Telegraph*, March 10, 1939. This issue of "slanted" news was fully discussed in Parliament and as vigorously denied by the Government. H. of C., *Ibid.*, V. 345, March 15, 1939, col. 453, 486-9. On March 10th, Sir John Simon had stated: "As far as the democracies are concerned, the policy of Germany and Italy is a policy of peace and tolerance, and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiations," and he envisaged five years of peace. See "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 25, 1939, p. 451.

³⁶ *French Yellow Book* (1939), p. 60.

³⁷ Bonnet, *Fin d'une Europe*, 126 ff.

Thus on the eve of Hitler's *coup de grace* against mutilated Czechoslovakia, both Britain and France believed that Germany and Italy would provoke a series of crisis designed to break the morale of the democracies and the western system of alliances. The West believed that there was a fifty percent chance of war at this time, but both France and Britain believed that if war did come, the fighting would be chiefly in the Mediterranean because the Maginot Line would hold the Germans out of France and that the British and French fleets could bottle up Italy completely, in which case the Germans would be forced to use their slender reserves to bolster their ally. Meanwhile the Germans would doubtless bomb London, but even that might have the advantage of arousing American opinion and bringing the United States into the conflict. Furthermore, Britain and France envisaged Turkey, Russia and Rumania joining the British-French coalition and they thought that Yugoslavia, Poland and even Czechoslovakia might eventually do likewise. All in all, they failed to see how Germany could win in the long run. Thus it appeared that the firm stand of the French against the Italian claims and the steady rearmament of Britain had really impressed Hitler.³⁸

The American stand certainly heartened the statesmen of London and Paris and may even have troubled Hitler to some extent. Mr. Chamberlain stated frankly that Mr. Roosevelt's Annual Message and the American rearmament program had, in his opinion, brought about Hitler's "quieting down."³⁹ Thus the "quieting down" of Hitler in February and early March of 1939, attributed by London and Paris, at least in part, to the firmer attitude of the United States, gave rise to an entirely unwarranted optimism in Britain.

One British publication noted that if there had been grounds for reassuring a too pessimistic public, the Prime Minister should have brought out the fact in the press. The picture of the whole London press carrying the same story by a reliable source in the Cabinet was much too suggestive of conditions in Rome and Berlin, according to the same publication.⁴⁰

It was at this time that Hitler struck eastward. President Hacha was summoned to Berlin and by the middle of March, German troops had occupied Prague. The Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia were declared German protectorates and Ruthenia was transferred to Hungary, whose troops had invaded that province even before those of the Germans.⁴¹

Before analyzing British opinion, it would be worthwhile to examine the reaction in other countries. For example, the United States had been divided since January, 1939, over the revision of the existing American

³⁸ Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 394-6.

³⁹ *The Times*, February 26, 1939.

⁴⁰ "A Spectator's Notebook," *The Spectator*, March 17, 1939, p. 434. See also *The Observer*, March 12, 1939.

⁴¹ *The Times*, March 16, 1939. Later charges were made that everyone but the British Government knew that the Germans were planning to march ten days before they did. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 346, April 19, 1939, col. 340-1; April 25, 1939, col. 966-7. See also the *Daily Worker*, March 6, 1939.

neutrality legislation. Thus when Hitler moved in mid-March, the basic neutrality policy of the United States was still unchanged.⁴²

The position of the United States in the spring of 1939 may therefore be summarized as follow: according to the Gallup polls, less than half of the population-forty-four percent-was as yet convinced that war would break out in Europe in the course of the year. As between the probable antagonists there was no doubt whatever as to which enjoyed American sympathies. Half of the population, at least, was agreeable to helping the British and French through the sale of airplanes and other war materials, though there was little if any sentiment for repeal of the Johnson Act which prohibited loans to countries which were in default on their war-debt payments.

But the most striking feature of the public attitude in America was the continuing and almost unanimous opposition to any involvement in another war. As the international scene grew increasingly darker, the American people looked more carefully to its own defenses and to those of the hemisphere, but refused to consider any extension of United States commitments. Thus the American reaction to the actual seizure stirred Washington deeply because of the close association of American with the creation of that post-war nation. The United States refused to recognize the seizure as final, much less to recognize it diplomatically.

Quite surprisingly, the attitude of the French Government, on the surface, was calm and reserved. The public, too, experienced no unusual alarm, feeling that there was no acute danger of becoming involved in it. There was manifest, however, a certain chagrin and astonishment that the Czechs did not resist the Germans. M. Daladier asked for dictatorial powers so that he could mobilize the nation's resources for a possible conflict, but this action was postponed. In the meantime, the French Chamber passed a resolution to send a note of sympathy to Czechoslovakia, which the French referred to as a "victim of imperialism and of force and violence."

While Italy and Japan naturally endorsed the seizure, the Poles were aghast at the German action. The Polish Government kept its silence, but ample evidence was available that there was considerable alarm at this sudden upset in the power balance in Central Europe. Poland, as a result of her role at Munich, stood alone and she frantically sought, without success, the cooperation of other small Eastern European countries in a scheme to pool their resources for a joint defense effort against Germany.

Soviet Russia branded the whole affair as "another typical Fascist swindle." She regarded herself as being out of the immediate future line of German expansion, and felt strongly that the nations most seriously

⁴² See F. O. Wilcock, "The Neutrality Fight in Congress," *American Political Science Review*, October, 1939, 811 ff. This provides an excellent analysis of the numerous proposals before Congress and public reaction to the problem.

affected were France and Britain, who by this time had lost all semblance of the former "steel-ring around Germany" system of alliances.⁴³

While Greece said nothing, Rumania adopted an extremely cautious attitude and put out mild feelers in Poland in an attempt to get a reaction to the suggestion that their own territorial disputes be adjusted before Hitler took a hand in the matter. While Yugoslavia fortified its frontiers common to Germany, Turkey showed considerable surprise that the Czechs had not fought and was convinced that eventually she herself would be brought into the conflict that was sure to come.

Hungary had been one of the recipient nations in the Munich crisis and its share of the Czech loot was considerable. Thus Hungary was at first greatly pleased over the whole affair, but as time went by, she began to question just what Germany would demand in return. The result was an even greater leaning toward Germany. The Netherlands, though expressing themselves as being "alarmed and shocked," were nevertheless comforted by the knowledge that Hitler could not repeat the Czech performance upon their country without bringing France and Britain into a war on their side.

OPINION CHANGES FOREIGN POLICY

Back in Britain, the British Government at once protested the German action by informing Berlin that this latest action was "devoid of any basis of legality," and that it was, furthermore, "a complete repudiation of the agreement reached at Munich."⁴⁴

The British public did not need to be told that their policy had been changed by this latest act of German aggression. It altered their attitude toward certain other countries.⁴⁵ Mr. Churchill, in tracing the reaction of opinion to this latest shock, noted that the change in public opinion did not come at that time overnight, but rather over a period of a week. Mr. Churchill further noted that the change in opinion was more like the kindling of a fire, working up less slowly to a white hot heat than an explosive change.⁴⁶

A few days after the most recent German aggression, Mr. Chamberlain told an audience that the hopes of appeasement had been "wantonly shattered" and his question was how Hitler's action could be reconciled with Germany's repeated pledges of good conduct and in particular Hitler's

⁴³ A well-documented account of Soviet policy during this period appears in N. Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia*, V. II, pp. 211-276.

⁴⁴ *The Times*, March 16, 1939; see also "The Rape and After," *The Spectator*, March 17, 1939, pp. 423-4.

⁴⁵ Indicative of the fear by opinion was the poll, taken just after the German action which found that eighty-four percent of opinion in Britain favored more friendly relations with Russia. "The British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

⁴⁶ W. Churchill, "The Crunch," *Step by Step*, p. 324. See also "Agony of Czech," *The Economist*, March 18, 1939, p. 550.

personal pledge at Bad Godesberg that the Sudeten areas were the last of his territorial ambitions in Europe.⁴⁷

Neville Chamberlain asked, then, the question uppermost in the minds of opinion if this last German act was the end of an old adventure or the beginning of a new one. While wondering whether this was an attempt to dominate the world by force, he added that,

. . . I feel bound to repeat that, while I am not prepared to engage this country by new unspecified commitments operating under conditions which cannot now be foreseen, yet no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that . . . this nation has so lost its fiber that it will not take part to the uttermost of its power in resisting such a challenge if it ever were made.⁴⁸

PUBLIC OPINION APPROVES NEW POLICY

By March 20th, there had been a remarkable change of temper in the House of Commons. The issue that so sharply divided opinion in the previous months and years was closed.⁴⁹ Differences over foreign policy for the most part were a thing of the past. The majority of opinion in all parties was of one mind and greater unanimity was achieved than at any time since the first war as a result of Hitler's recent action. Neville Chamberlain's Birmingham speech did a great deal toward reassuring opinion as to the Government's new stand.⁵⁰

The Opposition and a few dissident Conservatives disliked the Prime Minister's justification of past policy, but they agreed that he had struck the right note with the new attitude toward Germany. Leaders of the Labor Party as well as those of the Independent Liberals saw Mr. Chamberlain and were informed what the Government intended doing in the latest crisis.⁵¹ However Mr. Eden's plea for a broadened National Government

⁴⁷ It appears that Mr. Chamberlain made a complete shift in two days. On March 15th, he had told the House that "internal disruption" had torn up the new state and that this had thrown out the proposed guarantee and he refused to associate himself with charges of a breach of faith. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, March 15, 1939, col. 440. It appears that before he spoke at Birmingham two days later, he was advised of the state of opinion and changed his planned speech to that cited above. See A. C. Johnson, *Viscount Halifax*, pp. 510-3; S. Hodgson, *Lord Halifax*, pp. 181-5; K. Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, p. 400; M. Flandin, *Politique Française*, p. 299.

⁴⁸ *The Times*, March 18, 1939. Wheeler-Bennett gives a good account of events immediately following the German action at Prague. Wheeler-Bennett, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, pp. 351-4.

⁴⁹ Sir Neville Henderson gives an excellent account of how Hitler's action crystallized the three groups of British opinion at this time. Sir Neville Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, pp. 106-7.

⁵⁰ See speech by M. Churchill, H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, April 3, 1939, col. 2499. See also "England Awakes," *The Economist*, March 25, 1939, pp. 601-2; M. Flandin, *Politique Française*, p. 244. Mr. Nicolson with great foresight did not agree at this time with those who said that the storm of opinion would die down and once again opinion would lean toward appeasement and peace at any price. He believed rightly, as later events indicated, that opinion was determined to either achieve peace by firmness or face war with resolution. Harold Nicolson, "People and Things," *The Spectator*, March 24, 1939, p. 482.

⁵¹ *The Times*, March 21, 1939.

found little response from the Labor Party.⁵² Furthermore, in those quarters which had for years opposed any contact with Russia, the demand arose for immediate Government action to line Russia up as an ally of Britain.⁵³

The section of the press that had been the most outspoken and which had clung the longest to isolationism for Britain and which had been the most consistent in their condemnation of all attempts to organize international peace, now openly blessed the new direction of foreign policy.⁵⁴ For example, *The Sunday Times* noted shortly after the crisis that "the Government are taking a foremost part in the movement to resist further acts of aggression by Germany."⁵⁵

OPINION WELCOMES NEW COMMITMENTS

Meanwhile Neville Chamberlain had given Poland a pledge of support. The foreign affairs debate in the House of Commons on March 27th brought out completely the change not only within Parliament but throughout the country as well.⁵⁶ Many members in both Houses felt that no single factor contributed so much to the disaster of the Munich crisis as that of *The Times* leader of September 7, 1938. Thus when *The Times* of March 25, 1939, while discussing Mr. Chamberlain's new pledge, deliberately appeared to whittle down the effect of the declaration and suggested that actually there was no undertaking on Britain's part to defend Poland's "integrity," an immediate reaction from opinion appeared.⁵⁷ Lord Halifax was forced to deny that the Government harbored any such thoughts in regard to the pledge.⁵⁸ And while not widely believed, it was charged that a member of the Cabinet was giving this lead to *The Times*.⁵⁹

However, the Prime Minister was not for one moment releasing his hold on the party leadership. This was indicated by the fact that on March 28th, he rejected the resolution set down by Mr. Eden, Mr. Churchill and some

⁵² H of C., *op. cit.*, March, 15, 1939, col. 471.

⁵³ See statement by Lord Halifax, H of L, *Ibid.*, V. 112, March 21, 1939, col. 313. See also "Britain's Rejoinder," *The Spectator*, March 24, 1939, pp. 472-3. This came on the heels of the announcement of the departure of a British Trade Mission to Moscow. *The Times*, February 21, 1939.

⁵⁴ See *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Express* denounced the action and even the *Mail* was critical and congratulated the Prime Minister on the new policy. *The Times*, March 16, 1939; *Daily Telegraph*, March 16, 1939; *Daily Express*, March 17, 1939; *Daily Mail*, March 20, 1939. See also "Hitler's Choice," *The Christain World*, March 23, 1939, p. 10. The press in many cases had made some astonishing volte-faces. "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 25, 1939, p. 445.

⁵⁵ *The Sunday Times*, March 26, 1939.

⁵⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, March 27, 1939, col. 997. It was noted that many Tories who were content with Mr. Chamberlain's about face later had doubts on whether he could carry through such a drastic change in policy. "After Czechoslovakia," *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 25, 1939, p. 445. Sir John Simon noted later that as a result of Hitler's breach of the Munich Pact, that it secured "more than anything else" the unity of British opinion. Lord Simon, *Retrospect*, p. 336.

⁵⁷ *The Times*, March 25, 1939. See H of C., *Ibid.*, April 3, 1939, col. 2569-81; "The Extent of Our Obligation," *The Christain World*, April 6, 1939, p. 16; "Action or Drift," *The Spectator*, March 31, 1939, pp. 516-7.

⁵⁸ H of L, *Ibid.*, V. 112, March 27, 1939, col. 708.

⁵⁹ Sir S. Cripps asserted at this time that "I believe that the kiteflying articles in *The Times* are more representative of the views of the British Government than the statements put out to contradict them by the Foreign Office." H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, April 3, 1939, col. 2545.

thirty other Conservatives which called again for a broad National Government for the proper prosecution of the policy recently laid down by Lord Halifax.⁶⁰

Finally, on March 31, 1939, in answer to charges that opinion in the country as well as in Parliament was in the dark over the Government's new policy, Neville Chamberlain stated that

I am glad to have this opportunity of stating the general policy . . . We have constantly advocated the adjustment, by way of free negotiation between the parties concerned, of any differences that may arise between them . . . In their opinion there should be no question incapable of solution by peaceful means . . .⁶¹

But knowing well what opinion was demanding, he went on to say that during the period of consultations then in progress with other Governments that,

. . . in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence . . . we would feel bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power.⁶²

The Government and the British people had traveled a long way in a few days. Such a pledge to Poland would have been unthinkable as well as impossible at any time since the end of the World War.⁶³

Actually opinion shifted so far that the pacifists became alarmed. For example, Duff Cooper, in a letter to *The Times* maintained that Britain had treated Germany too leniently in 1918 and the *Standard* quoted Lord Castlerose as saying that English parents would have to be prepared to see a million of their sons killed in battle and the Left Book Club was told that the war against Fascism was the only war worth winning.⁶⁴ It was

⁶⁰ H of C., *Ibid.*, March 28, 1939, col. 2103. See also "Parliament and the Crisis," *The Economist*, April 1, 1939, p. 7. On February 17, Lord Halifax made a speech to the Conservative Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and it almost seemed to have created a revolution in the minds of the backbenchers. Although the gathering was private, his remarks became widely known. Members were not prepared for what was in fact a re-orientation of British foreign policy, for he urged solidarity with France, careful attention to American opinion and cultivation of Britain's potential allies in Russia and Eastern Europe, with the openly expressed realisation that Britain must suit her language to her company. It revealed either a trial balloon for effect on opinion or an effort to keep the Conservatives together. "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, February 24, 1939, p. 287.

⁶¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, March 31, 1939, col. 2415.

⁶² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, March 31, 1939, col. 2415. *The Times* attempted to explain this into nothing. "A Stand for Ordered Diplomacy," *The Times*, April 1, 1939. See also Paul Reynaud, *La France a sauve L'Europe*, V. I, pp. 580-1.

⁶³ "The New Policy," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 8, 1939, pp. 508-9; "The Next Step," *Economist*, April 1, 1939, p. 7. However by March 20, the *Express* was back on the line that Britain had abandoned appeasement and was following a policy of encirclement. A poll found that early in April, eighty-three percent of opinion favored the British policy of military guarantees. "The British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

⁶⁴ *The Times*, March 22, 1939; *Evening Standard*, March 23, 1939; "The War Mind," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 8, 1939, p. 540.

no small wonder that the pacifists were concerned at the growing war spirit within British opinion.

OPINION HOLDS FIRM

Hitler's overrunning of the Czechs made him contented for only a week. On March 22nd, he presented Lithuania with an ultimatum demanding the return of Memelland within three days.⁶⁵ Memelland had been taken from Germany under the Treaty of Versailles and with a population mostly German, Hitler had long worked on the Nazification of that State. Lithuania could offer no resistance and readily gave in to Hitler's demand.⁶⁶

There was little comment or concern in the world as a result of the German seizure of Memel. The reasons for this were apparent. In the first place, Memel was one of those about which there had been so much dispute and conflict following World War I that most nations, except those immediately concerned, had washed their hands of the whole affair. Furthermore, Memel was undeniably German, and its people, like those of Danzig, had never concealed the fact that they wanted to be included in the Reich. Then too, the most important of the many phases behind the Memel incident was the actual ratification of the demand by the Lithuanians. This made all outside protest and reaction impossible, since under those circumstances, any outside comment would have constituted outside interference in an affair strictly between those two nations.

The United States could not withhold recognition, nor censure the German action, since no question of recognition was raised. Britain and Poland likewise were affected in the same way, but Britain did step down long enough from the strictly official viewpoint just long enough to send Lithuania a note of "sympathy" for the loss of her only seaport.

While British opinion had long noted the increasing pressure on Memel and while their attention was focused on events in other parts of troubled Europe, no action was ever proposed and none ever taken.⁶⁷ One publication noted that British opinion had felt that the return of Memel to Germany had been inevitable and that the guarantors of Memel's status who had watched the wrong committed after the First World War were not greatly troubled at seeing the wrong righted, particularly since it did not stir up added tension in Europe.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Arthur Keith, *Causes of the War*, pp. 384-5; Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1939, 246 ff.

⁶⁶ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, March 16, 1939, col. 1255; 1684. See also *The Times*, March 17, 1939.

⁶⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 305, October 24, 1935, col. 433-4; V. 292, July 19, 1934, col. 1272. Oddly enough, it was charged in the House of Commons in 1935 that German agents had been hawking questionnaires among Members of Parliament in regard to the alleged mistreatment of Germans in Memel by the Lithuanians. See H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 299, col. 804-5.

⁶⁸ "Return of Memel," *The Spectator*, December 16, 1938, p. 1032. Mr. Nicolson, incidentally, had no use for those who believed that Hitler had no more ambitions in Europe after he took Memel. See Harold Nicolson, "People and Things," *The Spectator*, March 31, 1939, p. 529. There were quite a few people, and not only in Britain, including Sir Nevile Henderson who believed that Hitler had no calculated and planned foreign policy, but rather that he just stumbled along from one objective to the next.

CHAPTER X

OPINION PREPARES FOR WAR

The shock on opinion was tremendous and it was swiftly followed by a complete change in Britain's foreign policy.⁶⁹ Hitler's annexation of Austria and of the Sudetenland had been viewed by the British people as mainly acts of absorption of Germans into Germany. Furthermore opinion had usually been calmed after each action by Hitler's pledges that this was the last thing he wanted.

But with the seizure of the land of millions of Slavs and the future filled with signs of more such seizures, the tide of opinion in Britain definitely and finally turned against the Axis Powers. Public opinion had finally reached the point where it realized fully and completely that Hitler's word was valueless and that their own freedom was threatened. Mr. Chamberlain told a friend at this time that if he had stood up in the House and had said that Hitler had given him new assurances, he would have been covered with derision by the members of that House.⁷⁰

While Neville Chamberlain was delivering his Birmingham address marking the turning point in British policy, his Foreign Office was receiving most alarming news. On the same day, the Rumanian Minister in London reported that the Germans had demanded from Rumania a monopoly of exports and the acceptance of measures of industrial restriction, in return for which Hitler was prepared to guarantee Rumania's frontiers. He further stated that his country considered this an ultimatum and that Rumania desired to know what position the British Government would take in the event of German aggression. Lord Halifax sent out feelers to the French and the Russian Governments as well as to those in Warsaw, Belgrade, Bucharest, Athens and Ankara. The replies which came back included every form of evasion. The Poles questioned the story of the German ultimatum and stated that it would have to consult with Bucharest before making any decision. Prince Paul of Yugoslavia expressed interest in any British proposals which might be made. Greece fell back on its limited obligations under the Balkan Pact, but was ready to consider a joint Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav guarantee of Rumania's frontiers if Bucharest requested it.

⁶⁹ The *Statesman* noted that the situation, while more grave than at any time before, had at least caused the British Government to embark on a belated attempt at collective security as the result of the increased dissatisfaction within the Tory Party itself. "Comments," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 1, 1939, p. 483.

⁷⁰ "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, April 7, 1939, p. 579.

The Turks were sympathetic but also limited themselves to the Balkan Pact and desired to wait and see what the British would do. The Rumanians themselves desired to avoid provoking Germany and were interested only in British-French support if they decided to offer armed resistance to the German demand.

There remained the question of the French and Russian attitudes. The Paris Government, and particularly M. Daladier, were fully prepared to take a strong line to halt the Germans. While completely skeptical about the German "ultimatum" and not at all sure that the Rumanians would resist under full pressure, the French were heartily in favor of "drumming up support for Rumania from the four corners of the earth." In M. Daladier's view, war was rapidly approaching. Diplomacy had almost ceased to count and the great problem then was to find enough armaments and allies.⁷¹

To the Kremlin the British approach must have come as a little surprising, in view of Stalin's then recent violent castigation of the Western Powers. But since on that occasion, Russian support for victims of aggression had been promised, it probably seemed to London not entirely paradoxical to inquire of Moscow what the Soviets might do in the event of a Nazi move against Rumania. All in all, the Soviet reply was not discouraging. M. Litvinov, while expressing surprise that the Rumanians had not first approached the Soviets and that since Britain had not offered anything definite, the Soviet Government suggested that a six-power conference of Britain, France, Russia, Poland, Rumania and Turkey be convened at Bucharest to arrange a program of mutual protection. This proposal was at once discarded by the British as being "premature," probably because the replies of the Balkan Governments to the original British inquiry had not yet been received in London. There is no reason to suppose that Britain had any covert purpose in view. At the time the situation was utterly confused and the replies from the other countries were being awaited. Furthermore, it had become apparent that the Rumanian report of a German "ultimatum" had been exaggerated. Under the circumstances, and in consideration of the well-known aversion of powers like Poland and Rumania for any dealing with the Soviets, the London Government may well have felt that the Soviet proposal was not only premature, but far too pretentious and dangerous.⁷²

What particularly confused the issue was a second move by the British Government on March 19, 1939 and taken before all the Governments consulted on March 17th had had a chance to answer. London then proposed to France, Soviet Russia and Poland that they agree to a public declaration, drafted by the British, which stated that in the event of a threat to the independence of any European state, the four signatory powers would at once consult on measures to be taken in order to form

⁷¹ In this regard, see Bonnet, *Fin d'une Europe*, 154 ff.

⁷² See M. Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia*, II. The Soviet interpretation is forcefully presented in *Falsificators of History*.

common resistance. M. Bonnet, who was in London at the time with President Lebrun, at once expressed his approval, but pointed out the probable difficulty of bringing both Russia and Poland into the same group.

M. Litvinov, who according to the official Soviet account, had been assured by the British Ambassador that the declaration would involve almost no commitments, promised that the Soviets would join in the effort if France and Poland did likewise. He expressed disappointment at the dropping of the Moscow proposal for a six-power conference. It remained for the Poles, then, to kill the British project. Foreign Minister Beck indicated that his Government might be willing to join with Britain and France, but that any association with Soviet Russia would be as unpleasant as it would be dangerous for it might provoke Hitler and perhaps lead to war.⁷³

As an alternative to the British proposals, the Poles suggested that Britain and France conclude a secret agreement along the lines of the suggested declaration, without prejudice to a later decision about the projected public statement. Colonel Beck evidently did not see fit to inform either London or Paris that on March 21, 1939, Hitler had resubmitted to Warsaw his proposals for a settlement of the Danzig and Polish Corridor problems. Obviously this ominous development must have influenced Polish policy. Hitler's previously mentioned ultimatum to Lithuania could only be taken as further indication that German eyes were looking eastward. The Poles, unwilling in any case to consider Soviet assistance, could no longer hope to remain on the fence. Colonel Beck, who only a few weeks before had expressed the greatest distrust of British policy and had voiced the conviction that in a crisis the British could always fall back on appeasement, was then obliged to look to the West and to exert his best efforts to secure firm assurances of support against German demands.

The British felt that in the event of further German aggression it was of great importance that Rumania or Poland, as the case might be, should offer armed resistance. These two states had signed a treaty of mutual assistance in case of attack by Soviet Russia. If possible, the Poles were to be induced to extend this obligation to cover the eventuality of aggression by Germans. In view of the known opposition of both Poland and Rumania to any suggestion of Soviet help, the attitude of Moscow in such a contingency seemed relatively unimportant and furthermore, the Government had little faith in the sincerity of Soviet policy and less faith in Soviet military power.⁷⁴

Thus the British Government, ignorant of the fact that Poland had refused outright all German proposals, decided on the evening of March 27th to make Warsaw a firm offer.⁷⁵ This decision meant relegation of Soviet Russia to a secondary defense role and it was obvious that the British and

⁷³ Bonnet, *Fin d'une Europe*, 161 ff.; K. Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 420-4.

⁷⁴ K. Feiling, *Life of Neville Chamberlain*, p. 403; Bonnet, *Fin d'une Europe*, p. 166.

⁷⁵ *Polish White Book*, No. 66; *Documents on the Outbreak of War* (German), No. 203 and 208.

French did not expect Russia "to make any substantial contribution to the problem of common security." The French Government fell in line with the British proposal and on March 29th, after a long Cabinet meeting, the British Government sent notes to Warsaw and Bucharest which embodied the pledge to assist Poland in the event of aggression on Poland.⁷⁶

The foregoing rather detailed explanation of the European crisis of March, 1939, is indispensable for an understanding of the British Government's action and the influence of British opinion on that policy. However, an explanation is necessary as well to show the course of American policy in this period, which influenced, but did not determine, events abroad. While it is unlikely that the American attitude had an influence on the British Prime Minister comparable to the pressure of British opinion, his Foreign Office and his own party colleagues which forced him to finally abandon appeasement, it may be considered as a factor, however slight, in his decision. Naturally to Hitler, it was clearly of great importance to know whether, if he continued on his course of aggression, the United States would support the Western democracies and if so, whether with material aid only. To London and Paris, the line of American policy was even more crucial, for it might well mean the difference between defeat and victory. It was not astonishing therefore that almost every chancellory in Europe, with the exception of those in Berlin and Rome, made a point of keeping the President and the American State Department fully advised. Even the Soviet Government, from time to time, hardly failed to express itself on current developments. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Washington statesmen were better placed than other statesman to see all aspects of the situation and, if they deemed it desirable, to exercise great influence.

The reaction of the United States Government to the German absorption of Czechoslovakia has already been discussed. President Roosevelt apparently drew nothing but pessimistic conclusions from Hitler's latest coup and convinced himself once more that the chances of stopping further Nazi aggressions through a policy based on appeasement were doomed to failure. There is nothing in the record to indicate that the President did not sympathize with the British-French efforts to strengthen resistance to Hitler's further advances and, if possible, to build up a peace front.

The American President and the United States State Department had, however, no part in the British program of stiffening the Poles and the Rumanians. Nonetheless the British guarantee to Poland was taken in Washington as marking a step forward inasmuch as it committed Britain to positive action in Eastern Europe.⁷⁷

The world situation as indicated above, was such that Britain had to change her policy to protect British interests. Not only the attitude of other

⁷⁶ Bonnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-9.

⁷⁷ An excellent account of the American position at this time is found in Langer and Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation*, 77 ff.

countries influenced British opinion and to some extent, the resulting policy, but the plain psychological effect of a nation overrunning other nations was even greater in turning opinion against the Axis Power. For while Mr. Baldwin had stated that the British frontier was on the Rhine, British opinion followed that theme and agreed that Britain should have nothing to do with the affairs of Central and Eastern Europe. However, with the passage of certain events, public opinion at last became aroused at the menace of Nazi aggression and the British Government had to give the Poles a pledge of support.⁷⁸

OPINION BACKS THE PLEDGE

In both Houses of the British Parliament, there was almost complete unity on the new policy of resistance to aggression. On April 3rd, Mr. Chamberlain described the Government's pledge to Poland as a tremendous departure from all previous policy. He noted that the British people were now united and that all agreed that Britain's position must be made clear to the aggressors, regardless of the result. He commented on the discussions taking place then with other countries with,

. . . There is no threat to Germany, so long as Germany will be a good neighbor. We are concerned not only with our own independence, but for the independence of all States which were threatened with aggression. In resistance to that, we welcome the cooperation of any country, whatever may be its internal system of government.⁷⁹

This statement by Neville Chamberlain was greeted with outspoken approval not only in the House of Commons but in the country as well.⁸⁰ Sir Archibald Sinclair and Winston Churchill came out strongly in support of the speech.⁸¹ Lloyd George's statement, while congratulating the Government's stand, had the desirable effect of disturbing some of the Government supporters who had not grasped the full implication of the Polish guarantee.⁸²

⁷⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, March 31, 1939, col. 2415. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, April 7, 1939, p. 579. The British nation had finally reached the point that Winston Churchill had long advocated, that of a "grand alliance" and redoubled efforts for rearmament.

⁷⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 345, April 3, 1939, col. 2489. Mr. Chamberlain's speech cited herein reassured public opinion again after German efforts to discount the Prime Minister's Birmingham speech of March 17th. See "Britain Girds Her Loins," *The Economist*, April 8, 1939, pp. 74-5.

⁸⁰ "The Next Stop," *The Spectator*, April 7, 1939, pp. 580-1. Another publication noted at the time that Colonel Beck would know from the temper of the House that there could be no public pressure for another Munich on Britain's part. See "Britain and Germany," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 8, 1939, p. 525.

⁸¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, April 3, 1939, col. 2496-96, 2496-2505.

⁸² H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2505-12. Mr. Nicolson commented on this feeling when he mentioned a conversation he overheard on the backbenches of the House. "You know," said one elderly Conservative to his neighbor, "I am a trifle uneasy about this Polish guarantee. It seems to me to imply a definite commitment on our part." "I quite agree," answered his companion, "and we must thank heaven that we have Neville at the helm." Harold Nicolson, "People and Things," *The Spectator*, May 12, 1939, p. 803.

Opinion, then, was no longer passive about events in Europe. In hailing this speech, opinion was voicing the desire that the Government take positive steps to halt the Germans. Opinion was now more concerned with the attitude of other states for it was realized that Britain needed allies.

Mr. Eden, in noting the approval given to the new policy by the powerful figures of Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, stated that the Government had taken the only way possible to maintain the peace. The former Foreign Secretary concluded his speech with the opinion that Mr. Chamberlain had exactly interpreted the feeling of the nation.⁸³ Sir John Simon described opinion with,

. . . No other course of events would have produced so united a revulsion of feeling in this country as the events that have occurred.⁸⁴

Here then was the psychological factor which had influenced British opinion and which, in turn, forced the Government to change its policy.

There was nothing new in the recent events that called for a revision of the previous stand taken by the Opposition. The demand for an alliance with Russia, on which the Opposition had always insisted, became urgent and essential for the success of what Mr. Eden had called the "peace front,"⁸⁵ and in Mr. Churchill's words, "the Grand Alliance against aggression."⁸⁶ Lloyd George remarked that "if we go in without the help of Russia, we shall be walking into a trap. It is the only country that can get there."⁸⁷ The Opposition believed that Britain could have had an alliance with Russia at any time if the Government had sincerely desired it. The Opposition continued to believe that such an alliance was the one and only way to stop Hitler. With most opinion not wanting another "dictated" Munich, combined with the factor of the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations and collective security, opinion demanded fresh attempts at alliances with all peace-loving nations, including Russia. The British people wanted security.⁸⁸

This popular feeling was not in the least weakened because it found its outlet in the orderly processes of British parliamentary debate and public discussion. Moral indignation was coupled with national resentment at Britain's being "pushed from pillar to post."⁸⁹

⁸³ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2512-5. See also "Government and Opposition," *The Economist*, April 15, 1939, p. 129.

⁸⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2581.

⁸⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 345, April 3, 1939, col. 2501.

⁸⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2575-7. See also "Diplomatic Maneuvers," *The Economist*, May 13, 1939, pp. 357-9.

⁸⁷ *The Times*, April 4, 1939.

⁸⁸ H of C., *op. cit.*, col. 2575-7. See also "Diplomatic Maneuvers," *The Economist*, May 13, 1939, pp. 357-9.

⁸⁹ Speech by Winston Churchill, H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 2499. But while Labor backed Mr. Chamberlain's new policy, both *The Statesman* and the *News Chronicle* served notice that Labor was retaining a free hand to oppose the Government at the first sign of a return to appeasement. "The New Policy," *The New Statesman and Nation*, April 8, 1939, pp. 528-9; *News Chronicle*, April 4, 1939.

The record indicates that popular support for Mr. Chamberlain increased as a result of the Prime Minister's pledge and his determined stand to resist aggression. Mr. Nicolson, in pointing out that Neville Chamberlain's change of policy coincided with a swing in public opinion, estimated that between sixty and sixty-five percent of the electorate supported the Prime Minister at this time.⁹⁰ The British Institute of Public Opinion found only a slightly lower figure-fifty-eight percent-that favored Mr. Chamberlain at the same time.⁹¹ This was due in part to the fact that the Prime Minister commanded strong party loyalty and also because there was no other British statesman who commanded anywhere near the popular support that he did.

ITALY SHOCKS OPINION

A few days later, there came an ugly remainder that there was more than one aggressor in Europe. On April 7, 1939, Mussolini invaded Albania.⁹² This small country, an independent state since 1913, had had a pact of friendship with Italy since 1925. A few days prior to the invasion, the British Government had questioned Italy about the increased military preparations along the Italian east coast and had received the reply that the action there in no way constituted a threat to Albania. However, three days later, Italy did invade that country without even a formal declaration of war.⁹³

It should be remembered that on March 20, 1939, the Prime Minister had written to Mussolini and had recalled their recent conversations in Rome and the possibility of a settlement of outstanding issues. It was known that Mussolini had been surprised by the German occupation of Prague and that he was anything but pleased by Hitler's highanded and independent action. If the British effort to wean Italy from her German ally had succeeded, it would have eliminated the threat of a Mediterranean war between France and Italy when such a war would have provided Germany with a free hand for an assault upon Britain and the Low Countries.

At this time and after Lord Halifax had inquired what the American viewpoint was with respect to Italy and President Roosevelt's advisors had suggested a strong note to Italy, the American President took a stronger step and on receiving the new Italian Ambassador on March 22, 1939, he endeavored to help the British policy by issuing a strong warning to the Italian representative concerning American feelings on the subject.

Nothing is known of Mussolini's reaction to the American leader's unconventional demarche, nor for that matter of the further history of Mr.

⁹⁰ Harold Nicolson, "People and Things," *The Spectator*, April 7, 1939, p. 590.

⁹¹ "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

⁹² *The Times*, April 8, 1939.

⁹³ *The Times*, April 5 and 8, 1939. See also "Comments," *The Spectator*, April 14, 1939, pp. 624-5.

Chamberlain's advances, but the fact is that Mussolini subsequently absorbed Albania. It seems likely that M. Daladier, ever the opponent of any but the most modest concessions to Italy, objected to the price the British were prepared to pay. Thus on March 27, 1939, the French Premier ended all thought of substantial French concessions to Italy and Mussolini's answer to this was given on April 7th.

While the United States denounced the attack as a "forcible and violent invasion" that constituted "unquestionably an additional threat to the peace of the world," opinion in France was a mixture of surprise, alarm and contempt. Officially, France stated that she would not take any separate action, but rather that she would wait for Britain to act. The French Council for National Defense, however, was immediately assembled for the purpose of devising means to speed arms production. Germany and Japan naturally praised the move by Italy.

Soviet Russia voiced her disapproval rather mildly, but expressed her unwillingness to take action against Italy, feeling that such a move should come first from Britain and France. By April 10th, all the members of the Balkan Entente declared themselves ready to implement a guarantee for their mutual assistance in case of further Axis aggression. Individually, however, each was charting its own course—a course determined by natural handicaps, rather than by national aspirations.

Rumania served notice that she did not consider the Italian invasion of Albania to be either alarming or warranting extreme concern. After a private conference with Turkey, she decided to accept Britain's offer of a protective alliance. Turkey, in turn, and in view of her long control of Albania prior to World War I, was indignant and much alarmed that a great power's military forces were actually intrenched on the Balkan Peninsula close to her western frontier.

Yugoslavia's geographic position made it extremely difficult for her to express herself freely, although her people and to a great extent, the Government, were violently anti-Italian. Further, Italy's powerful Axis partner was on Yugoslavia's northern frontier and therefore she could not accept any Anglo-French guarantee without seriously offending Germany. Thus, she washed her hands of the affair, assured Italy that she would not interfere and stated to Germany that she would seek no foreign alliances and would instead adhere to a strict neutrality policy.

Greece was greatly alarmed at the presence of so large a number of Italian troops on her northern frontier, yet realized that in a showdown with the Axis, there was not much that she could do. Thus she accepted the Italian assurances of friendship and to back the acceptance up, she stated that she was more satisfied with these than with the pledges of assistance offered by Britain.

When it is realized that the Italian invasion of Albania preceded by only five months the outbreak of World War II, it is particularly interesting

to note the tone of The Netherlands' reaction which was typical of that of all the Western European democracies. The Netherlands, while expressing great disapproval and uneasiness, felt that this was but one more link in the chain of evidence that the Axis was moving only into those areas where the "allies" (France and Britain) would not interfere, and thus that there was no real danger of an immediate European war.

Albania, to be sure, meant little, in terms of European politics, but the Duce's action at once raised the question whether he would next move against Greece or join with Hitler in an assault first on Yugoslavia and then on Rumania. In view of Hitler's demands on Poland with respect to Danzig, there could be little doubt that the two dictators had linked their forces for the realization of a combined program.⁹⁴

By this time, it became increasingly apparent that a general European "shooting" war was inevitable. As a consequence, the policy of appeasement changed its objective. In its earlier aspects this method of attempting to avoid war was to persuade the totalitarian governments to modify their territorial demands, in the hope that these curtailed acquisitions by the Axis Power would result in a permanent satisfaction of their claims. Now, in the revised policy of appeasement, the emphasis was on an attempt to persuade the dictators to submit their full demands to arbitration, then to stretch out arbitration, so that in the meantime, the appeasers could have more time in which to strengthen their military defenses.

Meanwhile in Britain, Mr. Chamberlain denounced the invasion in the House of Commons on April 13th with the words that "public opinion throughout the world has once again been profoundly shocked by this fresh exhibition of the use of force." He added that the British Government attached the greatest importance to the avoidance of disturbances, by force or threats of force, of the status quo in the Mediterranean and the Balkans. With that introduction, Neville Chamberlain proceeded to outline the new British commitments, which were,

. . . In the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece or Rumania, and which the Greek or Rumanian Government considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek or Rumanian Government, as the case might be, all support in their power.⁹⁵

The background to this was that the British Foreign Office approached Paris with the question of whether the Paris Government would join in giving Greece a guarantee like that already given to Poland. In that, the French had not been directly involved, for their obligations to Poland had already been defined by existing treaties. Further, M. Bonnet had had no faith in the original British scheme for public declarations and had proposed that Britain and France both guarantee Poland and Rumania as the

⁹⁴ See Langer and Cleason, *The Challenge to Isolation*, pp. 78-9.

⁹⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 346, April 13, 1939, col. 49-52.

preliminary to an invitation to Russia to support those countries in case of attack. While perfectly willing to guarantee Poland, France believed that Hitler would next move against Rumania because of the oil fields there. Therefore, when Britain proposed a guarantee to Greece, the French insisted on a similar guarantee to Rumania. London objected to this on the plea that it would ruin the chances of Poland's accepting a military alliance with Rumania against Germany. But the time was short and the British, much concerned about the position in the Eastern Mediterranean, decided to yield and this then was culminated by the April 13th announcement. The Greeks were delighted, in the way previously noted, and Rumania was grateful, but the Poles were so irritated that they were little inclined to close the Balkan front by negotiating a further alliance with Rumania.

Again in this new commitment, British opinion approved the new pledge and whatever hope had previously existed of winning Italy over to Britain's side was given up by all but the most pro-appeasers. The Opposition loudly demanded that the Government stop aggression in Europe and these critics were able to once more point out that the Government had suffered another serious setback in its quest for appeasement.⁹⁶

Interestingly enough, President Roosevelt had sent a message to Hitler at about the same time in which he suggested that the German Government give fresh assurances against further aggression. This clearly revealed the close synchronization of events on either side of the Atlantic, even though there was no planned linkage of policies between the Western Powers and the United States.

In Britain meanwhile, critics of the Government noted that it was disturbing to note that all the leaders who had been right during the previous year in regard to foreign policy were still outside the Government while those who had been wrong not only once but several times were still in the Government.⁹⁷

A few weeks later, Prime Minister Chamberlain, in endeavoring to hold opinion on his side, stated that the independence of no small state was safe if it stood in the way of German ambitions and that,

. . . Unless some new stabilising factor could be introduced into Europe, the dissolution of a large part of Europe might be imminent. The pledge to Poland, Rumania and Turkey were the means to supply this new stabilising factor.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Still the Opposition was kept informed by the Government and for the time, played their part in the House and in public with dignity and common sense. "Seeking the Peace," *The Economist*, April 29, 1939, p. 239; "Answer to Mussolini," *The Spectator*, April 14, 1939, p. 620-1.

⁹⁷ See "The Government and the Opposition," *The Economist*, April 15, 1939, p. 129. As a result of Germany's and Italy's action, Mr. Attlee, Mr. Dalton and Sir Archibald Sinclair took special pains to state their opinion that the policy of appeasement was dead and the Government would have to realize this. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 346, April 13, 1939, col. 21-8, 16-21, 120-30.

⁹⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 347, May 19, 1939, col. 1832. See also *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, V. XII, No. 55.

This was undoubtedly approved by British opinion as indicated by a poll taken at this time which found that four out of five people in Britain approved these guarantees.⁹⁹

However, there continued to be considerable support for the Government's stand in refusing to denounce the Anglo-Italian Agreement. While many critics in Parliament demanded such action, the bulk of the Conservatives felt that in not denouncing the Agreement, there remained some chance that Italy might continue to remove her troops from Spain.¹⁰⁰

Later in April, there was strong criticism of the Government's action in recognizing the Italian conquest of Albania which was accomplished, it was asserted by the critics, with the dispatch of a British Ambassador to Albania.¹⁰¹

In addition, a good part of opinion in Britain was resentful at Britain's being pushed from point to point by what was generally considered a third-rate power, particularly as regards seapower and opinion wanted their Government to apply more pressure on Italy.

HENDERSON'S MISSION AND OPINION

Meanwhile, events, were moving faster in the diplomatic scene between Britain and Germany. Sir Neville Henderson's peace mission to Berlin aroused bitter statements in Parliament on April 24th. Generally, opinion was evenly divided between those who felt that his mission would be taken as a return to a policy of appeasement by Germany and rest of the world and those who regarded it as essential that Britain's position be made clear to Germany. There was a much stronger body of opinion that believed that under any circumstances, Sir Neville Henderson should not have been the British representative to return to Germany. This section of opinion was highly suspicious that Ambassador Henderson might attempt some private "deal" with German officials.¹⁰²

Hitler's reply to British efforts to halt aggression was the denunciation of the 1935 Naval Agreement with Britain. While denouncing this in the

⁹⁹ "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

¹⁰⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 346, April 13, 1939, col. 13-4. See also "This Week's Aggression," *The Economist*, April 15, 1939, pp. 121-2. Mr. Churchill supported the Government's action on this issue by stating that he was not at all certain that Italy had made up her mind to become involved in war with Britain. This appeared to sum up the major factor which shaped opinion and gave the Government the majority it needed to remain in office. H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 29.

¹⁰¹ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 346, April 24, 1939, col. 757; April 26, 1939, col. 1111-2; May 1, 1939, col. 1483-4; V. 348, June 5, 1939, col. 9-10.

¹⁰² H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 346, April 25, 1939, col. 1087. While Mr. Gallacher called his return to Berlin bad in itself, he asserted that the dispatch of Lord Lothian as Ambassador to the United States as outright appeasement. H of C., *Ibid.*, April 27, 1939, col. 1342. One publication charged that Sir Neville Henderson was at least responsible for the disasters of the preceding twelve months. "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, April 29, 1939, p. 695; see also "Diplomatic Melee," *The Economist*, April 29, 1939, p. 243.

Reichstag on April 22nd, he also denounced the non-aggression pact of 1935 with Poland.¹⁰³

OPINION AWARE OF THREAT

The very serious obligations Britain had recently incurred to Poland, Rumania and Greece compelled the British Government to reconsider the nation's military resources. Never in the history of Britain had military conscription been adopted in peace time. Both Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Baldwin had previously given the British people firm assurances that conscription would never be adopted in time of peace. But in the spring of 1939, the Government decided that this course was no longer in the best interests of national security. Therefore, Mr. Chamberlain presented to the House of Commons a plan for compulsory service and he explained that special circumstances of the moment justified this unusual step and that it was not intended as a permanent change of policy.¹⁰⁴

Both Opposition parties were strongly hostile to the proposal and a Labor motion of no confidence was moved by Mr. Attlee on the ground that Labor was concerned over the bill because the country might drift into industrial conscription.¹⁰⁵

Sir Archibald Sinclair, leader of the Liberal Opposition, joined the attack on the Government.¹⁰⁶ In answering the charges that the Government had abandoned election pledges, Mr. Chamberlain simply replied that he had changed his mind under the pressure of events in which Mr. Churchill had called Britain's "tremendous and staggering" new commitments in Europe.¹⁰⁷ However, opinion appeared to be aware of the new danger facing the country and the measure was easily carried.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ *The Times*, April 29, 1939. A poll on his statement found that fifty-eight percent believed he was wrong when he said that Britain would always be opposing Germany in any war while thirty-one percent thought it was true. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

¹⁰⁴ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 346, April 26, 1939, col. 1204. He also used the recent Memel incident to bolster his argument. A poll taken at this time found that fifty-eight percent of opinion favored conscription while thirty-eight percent favored a volunteer army and four percent were undecided. Just one month earlier, these figures had been thirty-nine, fifty-three and eight percent respectively. "The British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82. See also Kennedy, *Why England Slept*, p. 196; Bonnet; *De Washington Au Quai D'Orsay* p. 337.

¹⁰⁵ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 347, May 8, 1939, col. 152. Lloyd George viciously attacked the Tory leader, H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 73-5. While the keynote of Labor's Summer Conference was distrust of Mr. Chamberlain and his advisors rather than dislike of the Tory policy, it was decided not to oppose conscription outside the House or to boycott the Government's defense plans. "Common Sense at Southport," *The Economist*, June 3, 1939, pp. 539-40.

¹⁰⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 346, May 4, 1939, col. 2165-70.

¹⁰⁷ H of C., *Ibid.*, April 26, 1939, col. 1205.

¹⁰⁸ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 347, May 8, 1939, col. 120-2. However, a poll taken at this time indicated that fifty-seven percent of opinion felt that the risk of war had actually decreased and only thirty percent believed it had increased. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82. See also "Why There is No War in Europe," *The New Statesman and Nation*, June 10, 1939, p. 885; "Security and Peace," *The Economist*, May 20, 1939, p. 417.

During this period, greater efforts were made by Britain to reach an agreement with Russia. This was being demanded more and more in every debate in the House by opinion. Many reasons have been suggested for Britain's inability to come to terms with the Russians in the spring of 1939, but no attempt will be made here to discuss those reasons. The fact remains that opinion greatly desired such a pact in the light of the ever-increasing threat of continued German aggression. The people wanted security, even if it was the result of an alliance with a politically disfavored country.¹⁰⁹

The Opposition blamed the Government for the lengthy course of negotiations with Russia and they demanded that Lord Halifax travel to Moscow to speed up the dragging negotiations.¹¹⁰ But it was pointed out that he would hardly have been acceptable to the Russians because of his June 8th speech in the House of Lords in which he had once again expressed his distaste for a "division of Europe into politically hostile groups," and at the same time suggesting a conference to readjust Germany's claims for expansion.¹¹¹

This speech spelled an unmistakable retrogression toward appeasement in the eyes of public opinion. One publication voiced what was probably the general feeling when it noted that it was of capital importance to cut short the argument with Russia because of the critical situation.¹¹² But it appeared that Mr. Chamberlain was attempting to treat fairly Germany's claims of being encircled.

It would be well to note Russia's action at this time. Stalin's famous address to the Supreme Soviet on March 10, 1939, may well have been a landmark in what would turn out to be a startling diplomatic revolution. The ambiguity of his speech was such that it could hardly have been accidental. Actually it served the purpose of leading on both parties to the

¹⁰⁹ See report by Count Grandi to Count Ciano, *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, V. XII, No. 11. For an interesting account of how European governments safeguarded themselves against rival ideologies, see Karl Loewenstein, *Contrôle législatif de l'extrémisme politique dans les démocraties européennes*, 136 pp.

¹¹⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 347, May 10, 1939, col. 502. See also "The Answer to Mussolini," *The Spectator*, April 14, 1939, pp. 620-1; "A Matter of Tactics," *The Economist*, May 20, 1939, p. 432. Strangely enough, *The Times* set off the story that there were to be some Cabinet changes at this time and this lead became the center of a sharp debate in the House. "Tired Ministers," *The Times*, May 26, 1939; "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, May 26, 1939, p. 887. See also report in *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, V. XII, No. 2.

¹¹¹ H of L, *Ibid.*, V. 113, June 8, 1939, col. 506. See also comment in "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, June 9, 1939, p. 983. A poll indicated that Lord Halifax was not running with opinion. The poll found that eighty-four percent of opinion desired a military pact between Paris, London and Moscow. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

¹¹² "Russia and Peace," *The Spectator*, May 19, 1939, p. 836. Parliament demanded at this time that the letter campaign in *The Times* for appeasement be disavowed by the Government. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 347, May 19, 1939, col. 971-3. There was in addition a question at this time in regard to the German conquest of Prague over the Government's action in sending British consuls to that area. H of C., *Ibid.*, May 26, 1939, col. 2686-2756; H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 348, June 19, 1939, col. 1786-8. See also "Chamberlain and the Czechs," *The Economist*, May 27, 1939, p. 484.

dispute. The British read it as an expression of readiness to aid the victims of aggression and therefore Russia would join a united front. On the other hand, the Germans took it as an invitation to bury the hatchet and restore good neighborly relations. Though proof is impossible, it does seem that the Soviet plan was to negotiate with the Western Powers in the hopes of making Hitler agreeable to a pact with Russia, and at the same time to conjure up the spector of a Soviet-Nazi Pact to impress the Western Powers. The Soviet apologia leaves little doubt that the Kremlin's great fear was that Britain and France might, even at a very late date, revert to a policy of appeasement. It cannot be stated categorically that the long-drawn out negotiations between London, Paris and Moscow in the spring and summer of 1939 were nothing but a cat-and-mouse game on the Kremlin's part, but such a conclusion suggests itself from the available evidence.

It stands to reason that Stalin's calculating plan, if such it was, could succeed only if there was, on Hitler's part, some disposition to abandon the much advertized anti-Bolshevik policy. In this respect the moment was certainly favorable, for by April of 1939, German hopes of bringing Japan into an alliance with Germany and Italy were fading, while the efforts of the democracies to construct an anti-German front seemed to promise well. It is interesting to note that on April 17, 1939--the very day on which the British made their proposal to the Soviet Government, the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin was seeking a conference with Baron Weizsacker.¹¹³

This, then, was the background to the Kremlin's reply of April 19, 1939, to the British and French proposals. The Soviet note had set forth the idea of an out-and-out military alliance providing for mutual assistance in case one of the there partners was attacked by Germany or became involved in war because of aid given to a victim of German aggression. In Paris, as in London, this was regarded as a large order, but beyond that the views of the two Governments diverged. M. Bonnet, intent on a military alliance with Russia that would impress and possibly deter Hitler, was prepared to overlook Soviet designs in the Baltic and even convinced himself that in a crisis the Poles and Rumanians would agree to accept Soviet material aid.

M. Bonnet made every effort to induce the British to associate themselves with even a slightly more favorable proposal, but in vain. The London Government was anxious at this time to avoid any move that might provoke a final division of Europe into two hostile camps or that might precipitate an immediate Nazi attack on Poland or Rumania. It may be taken for granted that Hitler's denunciation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 served to strengthen British unwillingness to accept

¹¹³ US Dept of State, *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-41*, edited by Raymond J. Sontag and James S. Beddie, pp. 1-2; Ernest von Weizsacker, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 230-1; Peter Kleist, *Zwischen Hitler und Stalin*, 26 ff.

the far-reaching and somewhat suspect proposals of the Kremlin. In its note to Moscow on April 29, 1939, the British Foreign Office therefore stuck by its original view that the Soviet Government should guarantee only "certain countries of Eastern Europe."¹¹⁴

Both the British and French notes of April 29, 1939, appear to have been informal suggestions rather than formal replies. They registered little progress and promised almost nothing in terms of eventual agreement, considering the fact that not even the two Western partners could unite on a single line.

Back in Britain by mid-May, the House of Commons was in a strangely optimistic mood. Its members felt that the corner to peace had been passed at last while Neville Chamberlain in his speech at Albert Hall assured British opinion that Britain had returned to a positive policy of collective security.¹¹⁵ Psychologically, this was exactly what British opinion had wanted to hear from the Prime Minister because their fears were based in part on Britain being left to "go it alone."

However, the problem of Danzig was fast becoming critical.¹¹⁶ The following extract from leading press stories accurately mirrored what opinion felt about Danzig and appeasement. Under the heading of "Die for Danzig," the *Mail* warned that,

... Nobody here wants Poland to accept "peace at any price," but let us not confuse honor with mere punctilios and reduce the relations of Europe to the status of a seventeenth century dual. Neither the French nor the British are willing to die for Danzig. Are the Poles prepared to do so?¹¹⁷

The *Telegraph* took the opposite view with,

It has been said that "Danzig is not worth a war." If that declaration had been addressed to Germany it would have been timely and relevant. Addressed to Poland and the Powers who have guaranteed her against aggression, it is both mischievous and untrue, for it implies that peace is to be attained by another surrender to intimidation, and by the sacrifice of interests which are vital to Poland and which Poland is determined to defend.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Bonnet, *Fin d'une Europe*, pp. 182-3; Gafencu, *Derniers jours de l'Europe*, pp. 165-7; *German White Paper*, No. 14.

¹¹⁵ *The Times*, May 17, 1939; "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, May 19, 1939, p. 839.

¹¹⁶ As in the case of Memel, German pressure on Danzig had begun years before and had been mentioned in Parliament. H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 299, March 18, 1935, col. 803, H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 300, April 10, 1935, col. 1127-8; H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 312, May 14, 1936, col. 565; H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 321, March 2, 1938, col. 217-8. See also Mildred Wertheimer, *Nazi Pressure in Danzig* (1937), 16 pp.

¹¹⁷ *The Daily Mail*, May, 7, 1939.

¹¹⁸ *The Daily Telegraph*, May 5, 1939. While public pressure forced *The Times* to withdraw its inept lead that "Danzig was not worth a war," it continued to print letters from high people urging discussions with Germany and a return to appeasement. *The Times*, May 13 and 14, 1939.

Thus during May and June of 1939, public opinion was bewildered by rumors that the Government was attempting to return to appeasement.¹¹⁹ This was difficult to understand after the Government had repeatedly stated that further aggression would not be tolerated. The rumors stemmed from the previously mentioned speech by Lord Halifax which had affirmed a dual policy of resistance and conciliation and from Neville Chamberlain's speech to the House in which he repudiated any desire on his part to impede "the natural and legitimate expansion of German trade in Central and Southeastern Europe" or to block any reasonable aspirations there.¹²⁰

These statements, accompanied by secondary rumors of appeasement aroused no little criticism from those who opposed any and all appeasement. Such critics were in three groups. There were those who contended (1) that any gesture of appeasement at this time would have shown a weakening on Britain's part, (2) those who felt that the Government's statements were ill-timed with the King in America and the Russian negotiations in progress and finally (3) those that realized that Germany would only stop if faced with a two-front war.¹²¹ An opinion poll indicated that Germany was very much disliked.¹²²

Parallel with the controversy over appeasement to Germany, a bitter debate arose again over the Spanish policy. Many suggested that the Government was appeasing Spain. The issue arose when Italy was both slow in the removal of troops from Spain and Italy's failure to completely remove certain war material from Spain after promising to do so.¹²³ The issue was used by those opposed to appeasement to keep the Government from slipping back into appeasement with the Axis Powers.¹²⁴ The Opposition took the occasion to charge the Government with misleading the House in regard to the presence of foreign troops early in the war in Spain. This was particularly significant in view of recent disclosures by Hitler and

¹¹⁹ "Current Appeasement," *The Christian World*, May 11, 1939, p. 14. Of this, *The Economist* said: "... and nothing will ruin our second chance so quickly as the suspicion that we intend ... to purchase our peace with their sacrifices" "Diplomatic Maneuvers," *The Economist*, May 13, 1939, pp. 357-8. A poll found that fifty-six percent of opinion favored a place in the Cabinet for Mr. Churchill while twenty-six percent opposed it. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

¹²⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 348, June 8, 1939, col. 1243. Speech by Mr. Chamberlain in *The Times*, May 13, 1939. There was a warning that Britain's good intentions not be mistaken for a return to appeasement. "Propaganda or Appeasement," *The Economist*, June 17, 1939, pp. 645-6.

¹²¹ Harold Nicolson generally agrees with these division of opinion. "People and Things," *The Spectator*, June 16, 1939, p. 1035.

¹²² Opinion preferred the following in order: United States, thirty-three percent, France, twenty-two percent, Russia, twelve percent and Germany, three percent while opinion disliked in order: Germany fifty-four percent, Japan eleven percent, Italy, nine percent and Russia, five percent. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

¹²³ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 343, May 2, 1939, col. 541. See also "This Week in Parliament," *The Spectator*, June 9, 1939, p. 983.

¹²⁴ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 346, April 18, 1939, col. 175-7; H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 348, June 5, 1939, col. 12-5. See also "Withdrawal of the Mercenaries," *The Economist*, June 3, 1939, pp. 542-3.

Mussolini that German and Italian troops had been put into Spain early in the war.¹²⁵

And adding fuel to the fire was the Government announcement that the British Ambassador would attend Franco's victory parade. It appeared to be that the supporters of the Government's policy in Spain were firmly convinced that Franco could be drawn away from the Axis connection and these supporters were prepared to go to almost any length in the furtherance of this new venture in appeasement, regardless of what opposition they might meet.¹²⁶

Meanwhile, in answer to repeated German charges that British foreign policy aimed at the encirclement of Germany, Mr. Chamberlain in a speech at Cardiff on June 24th noted that,

. . . The aim of our foreign is now, as always, to establish a peaceful world, where each nation can pursue its occupations in security and confidence. In a world in which confidence was restored, Britain and Germany could well cooperate in developing resources which still lay latent, and which would bring in returns of solid value to both. But such a happy future must remain a dream until Germany is ready to drop her unjust suspicions.¹²⁷

In urging cooperation, the Prime Minister appeared to be following the wishes of opinion. A poll found that sixty-one percent of opinion in Britain believed that the time had come for the "peace Front" countries to draw up a detailed plan for world peace as the basis of a conference to which all countries would be invited.¹²⁸ Opinion feared war and desired that every possible effort be made to avoid war, short of one-way appeasement.

Lord Halifax expressed the public feeling on the subject when he spoke at the Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs in June. After asserting that Britain had assumed new obligations and was preparing to assume more, he noted that

. . . We are told that our motives are to isolate Germany within a ring of hostile states, to stifle her natural outlets, to cramp and throttle the existence of a great nation. The fact is that Germany is completely isolating herself-economically, politically and culturally. It

¹²⁵ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 348, June 7, 1939, col. 391,400, and June 12, 1939, col. 1272-9. At this time there was criticism of the Government on the so-called "Czech Gold Standard." There were those who mistrusted the Government and who believed that this was not an isolated incident and that more than one minister rode out of danger on half-truths and who did not command the public's confidence. See "Czech Gold Scandal," *The Spectator*, June 2, 1939, p. 943.

¹²⁶ H of C., *Ibid.*, V. 347, May 15, 1939, col. 969-73 and May 19, 1939, col. 1849-78.

¹²⁷ *The Times*, June 25, 1939.

¹²⁸ "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

depends on the German Government alone whether this process of isolation continues or not, for any day it can be ended by a policy of cooperation.¹²⁹

Lord Halifax concluded his speech with the thought that the threat of military power was holding the world up to ransom and that Britain's immediate task was to resist aggression. And he wanted no one to misunderstand Britain's position in this regard.¹³⁰

It was on this policy, then, so well defined by the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax, most of the nation appeared to be united. The *Sunday Times* noted that

... One sure indication that the Government's foreign policy now commands the support of all parties is the absence of any demand for debating it in the House of Commons. Foreign affairs, which during most of the session, took up a large part of the time of the House, are in these days mentioned only at question time.¹³¹

DANZIG AGAIN

Meanwhile, the Danzig problem was becoming more critical and Neville Chamberlain once again defined the British attitude on July 10th with,

... We have guaranteed to give our assistance to Poland in case of a clear threat to her independence and which she considers it vital to resist by her national forces, and we are firmly resolved to carry out this understanding.¹³²

A poll of opinion indicated that this time seventy-five percent of opinion in Britain was in favor of fulfilling the British pledge to Poland if Poland was attacked by Germany.¹³³

¹²⁹ *The Times*, June 30, 1939. See also Vera Micheles Dean, "Europe's Diplomatic Tug of War," *Foreign Policy Reports*, V, 15, July 15, 1939, pp. 102-12. Mr. Dalton asserted late in July, over a month later, that Mr. Chamberlain had not yet clearly and firmly endorsed Lord Halifax's speech, in spite of the fact that both Leaders of the Opposition had done so. Dalton asked for an answer due to the fact that this was being whispered around in Parliament and hinted at in the press. Mr. Chamberlain then accused Hugh Dalton of not doing the country a good service when he suggested that Britain was still divided upon the main policy so recently laid down. *H of C., Parl. Deb.*, V, 350, July 31, 1939, col. 1993-6, 2019.

¹³⁰ *The Times*, June 30, 1939. Most of the press on June 30th carried articles listing the three stipulations publicly announced by an "authoritative spokesman" as to the basis of any negotiations over Danzig. The Government refused to answer this question in the House. *H of C., Ibid.*, V, 349, July 5, 1939, col. 1786-90.

¹³¹ *The Sunday Times*, July 2, 1939.

¹³² *H of C., Parl. Deb.*, V, 350, July 10, 1939, col. 233. The French Ambassador in Berlin reported that the precise position taken by the British and French Governments, as publicly stated, appeared to have impressed the German Government. *Le Livre Jaune Français, Documents Diplomatiques*, 1939-39, No. 162.

¹³³ "The British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82. See also the Italian report on opinion in Britain at this time. *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, V, XII, No. 408.

In spite of these repeated declarations of the British attitude over Danzig, the Germans continued to express doubts that British opinion would back their Government and go to war over Danzig. At the time, even if Hitler's daring plan to buy off the Kremlin were to succeed, the Nazi leader still had to face the question of whether Britain and France would honor their obligation to support Poland. This question was a vital one to the Germans, yet their evaluation of it is still not completely clear. Postwar studies of German capabilities, based on German records, show that Nazi military power and war production in 1939 was greatly overestimated by the Western Powers. There can be little doubt that the Germans of 1939 were far from prepared for a long war on a large scale. Their current war production was inferior to that of the combined British and French and they had remarkably little in the way of reserves. They were by no means ready for the type of war in which they became involved.¹³⁴

Hitler and his military chiefs were therefore bound to consider the probable course of British and French policy, even if Soviet Russia were successfully neutralized by an agreement. The Germans had concluded with Italy on May 22, 1939, the so-called Pact of Steel, but this alliance was of little military value. The Italians had made it perfectly clear throughout that they would not be ready for a major war for several years. The Germans, on their side, were probably more interested in keeping Italy from a peaceful arrangement with Britain and France than they were in any potential Italian military contribution. They therefore assured the Duce that they too foresaw no large-scale hostilities for years to come and expressed full confidence that the Danzig issue could be solved by negotiations.¹³⁵ Hence the problem narrowed down to whether the Germans could localize the conflict with Poland or whether they would have to plan on the active intervention of Britain and France.

In the absence of further evidence, one must therefore assume that Hitler discounted heavily the possibility that Britain and France would fight for Poland.¹³⁶ Hitler probably calculated that even if the Western Powers intervened, they would be unable to prevent a rapid German victory, and that once Poland was seized, the Western Powers would accept the accomplished fact rather than embark on a prolonged conflict. As will be indicated in the following pages, the key item in the calculation was the absence of Soviet Russia, to the assurances of which Hitler thereafter applied himself.

With the foregoing assumptions in mind, and in spite of the fact that Sir Neville Henderson had told the Germans what the British action would

¹³⁴ In this regard, see Hanson W. Baldwin, "Hitler's Rise to Power in 1939," which summarizes a USA Army report entitled: *Foreign Logistical Organizations and Methods* (reprinted in *The New York Times*, May 9, 1948).

¹³⁵ Chief sources are the *Ciano Diaries* and *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*; Mario Donosti, *Mussolini e l'Europa* (Rome, 1945) and S. Toscano, *Le Origini del Patto d'Acciaio*, Chapter IV.

¹³⁶ See the statement of State Secretary Weizsacker to the British Ambassador on August 16, 1939. *British Blue Book*, No. 48.

Interestingly enough, the British and French military missions arrived in Moscow on August 11, 1939, just as the conversations between Russia and Germany were entering upon their crucial stage. The Soviet Government has since accused Britain and France of an "utter lack of seriousness" in treating the issue of the military agreement at that time. The Western Mission, because of the Polish fears of Russian intentions, had been instructed by their home governments to negotiate and to proceed slowly until the political agreement was signed.

Mr. Molotov's contentions and the postwar Soviet apologia both show that from the outset the Russians attempted to blame the British-French military mission for the breakdown of negotiations and for the conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet pact. Yet a comparison of dates disproves this reasoning. The Kremlin had agreed with Berlin on August 12, 1939, that is, before the beginning of the military conversations, to discuss concrete political problems. Furthermore, Stalin had consented to Ribbentrop's visit before the British and French had made a final statement on the issues of the passage of Soviet troops through Poland or Rumania. All the evidence indicates that the Soviet leaders desired the coming of the Western military mission partly to impress and soften the Germans and partly in order to keep the door open in case an agreement with Hitler proved impossible. By August 22nd, they certainly had reason to suppose that the Germans would give a great deal for a pact, yet even then Mr. Molotov made the strange suggestion that the military mission remain until the Kremlin had made sure of what Russia was getting. Viewed in this light, the much discussed stubbornness of the Poles in refusing to the passage of Soviet troops loses much of its importance. This issue was really nothing more than a convenient instrument by which the Soviet negotiators managed to drag out the discussions. All in all, Soviet policy at this time appeared to be one outright deception. Yet all of this, or at least its extent, apparently was unknown to the British Government and the British people.¹⁴⁷

The Russo-German Agreement was announced on August 23, 1939. Mr. Chamberlain delivered a note to Hitler to the effect that Germany's action in no way changed the British position.¹⁴⁸ In spite of these statements, there was still the greatest concern on the part of opinion that appeasement might rear its head and present the country with another Munich. Feelings of the press on appeasement were indicated by the reaction to Lord Kemsely's visit to Hitler's headquarters during August and the contemplated visit

¹⁴⁷ While United States State Department documents recently published indicate that the United States knew months in advance that Nazi Germany and the Soviet Government were negotiating a non-aggression pact, the same documents reveal that Britain and France were shocked when the Treaty was signed in Moscow. Dispatches to the Washington Government at the time said that the French Foreign Office was "stupefied," that the British Ambassador in Moscow the night before the pact was signed was apparently in "complete ignorance" of the degree of harmony between the Soviet Union and the Nazi Government and that apparently both the French and British Embassies in Moscow "appeared to have been taken in by the reassurances conveyed to them by Molotov . . ." US State Dept, *Foreign Relations, Russia, 1939*. See also *New York Herald Tribune*, February 27, 1956.

¹⁴⁸ *The Times*, August 24 and 27, 1939.

of Lord Londonderry. Even some of the Conservative press felt that it was the wrong time for such visits.¹⁴⁹

OPINION FINDS ITSELF IN WAR

When Gauleiter Forster was proclaimed head of Danzig on August 23, 1939, and the Poles then declared this action outside the powers of that city's constitution, the British Parliament was summoned into emergency session on the following day by Mr. Chamberlain.¹⁵⁰ Neville Chamberlain, in restating the Government's policy, asserted that Britain desired peace more than anything else, but that this country was resolved to resist further aggression.¹⁵¹

With such firm resolve on the Government's part, there was a most impressive unity in both Houses of the British Parliament. Lord Halifax probably expressed the popular feeling best with

... We have built up a society with values which are accepted not only in this country but over vast areas of the world. If we stand by and see these values set at nought, the security of all those things on which life depends seems, to my judgment, to be undermined; and that is a fundamental matter on which I scarcely think there will be any difference of opinion.¹⁵²

No issue ever presented to Parliament had so united all sections of the two Houses of Parliament in Britain. Similarly, opinion was united solidly behind Parliament. One periodical summed up the general feeling with

... For the British people, with a quiet and unflurried resolution as strong as anything in their history, have determined that it is better to fight a war than to yield an inch on a principle that has become one of national honor and national safety.¹⁵³

While the interval between the signing of the Russo-German non-aggression pact and the invasion of Poland was only ten days, what was the rest of the world doing? The attitude of the United States was going as predicated from past experience. The diplomatic revolution and the acute crisis in Europe served, if anything, to strengthen American opinion

¹⁴⁹ *The Times*, August 23, 1939; *Daily Herald*, August 25, 1939. Lord Londonderry asserted that after he was approached by Lord Winterton and others to visit Hitler, Lord Halifax at first approved and then withdrew his approval because opinion felt that it would "keep the ball rolling" and Lord Londonderry added that he offered another reason for not going because the press disclosed that he had conferred with Lord Kemsley, whose papers supported appeasement. Lord Londonderry, *Wings of Destiny*, pp. 224-6. The Italian Foreign Office noted that the British Ambassador in Rome conveyed Lord Halifax's opinion to Ciano and also made it plain that the door was open for a conference, the latter strictly secret. *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, V. XIII, Nos. 117, 154, 167.

¹⁵⁰ *The Times*, August 25, 1939 and Cmd 6102.

¹⁵¹ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 351, August 24, 1939, col. 345.

¹⁵² H of L, *Ibid.*, V. 114, August 24, 1939, col. 708.

¹⁵³ "Twilight Hours," *The Economist*, September 2, 1939, pp. 433-4. See also *Ministere des Affaires etrangeres, Le Livre Jaune Francais Documents diplomatiques 1938039*, No. 357.

along established lines. Yet thoughtful Americans, however, sick at heart, could not ignore the fact that one of the pillars of their faith was collapsing. They came to realize that war in Europe in the year 1939 was possible and most likely. Most of them clung desperately to the belief that the United States at all cost must avoid involvement, and like the British previously, American opinion seemed less rather than more willing to face the question of whether an aggressor could be stopped by anything less than force. But events, which, more than words, influence opinion were conspiring to prove the question an inescapable one. Once faced with war, it could not be ignored. The chances were that American sympathy for the democracies, greatly strengthened by the agreement of Germany and Soviet Russia, would force a gradual revision of attitude and policy as soon as actual fighting broke out.¹⁵⁴

In Europe, Britain also watched closely the action of Paris during the crisis. The British fears of a French return to appeasement were well founded as indicated by the records of the French War Council of August 23, 1939, which left no doubt that Foreign Minister Bonnet desired that France's obligations to Poland be reviewed in the light of Russia's defection and Poland's alleged responsibility in the Western reversal. M. Bonnet's recommendations were that France in lieu of embarking on a life-and-death conflict with the odds overwhelmingly against her, should instead press Poland to accept a compromise on Danzig and the Corridor. To the great relief of British opinion, the contrary decision was taken, partly no doubt because of the moral issue involved, but chiefly because General Gamelin, the French Chief of Staff, was convinced that Poland could hold out until spring which would be long enough for Britain to lend effective support to France.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, Britain's allies were anxious that Britain might revert to appeasement. The Poles and to some extent, the French were filled with anxiety on this score, while the American Government was utterly disgusted when American Ambassador Kennedy reported that the British wanted only one thing from the United States and that was American pressure on the Poles to reach a settlement. Even the Soviet leaders, when they concluded the pact with Hitler, seemed to have believed that the British would yield and accept another Munich.

While Sir Neville Henderson had departed on his mission of peace, British opinion did not for one moment allow the Government to step back into appeasement.¹⁵⁶ With this in mind, it was understandable that Mr.

¹⁵⁴ In August, 1939, a *Fortune* poll found that while seventy-six percent of the American public expected American to be involved in the war, eighty-four percent favored the Allies and only two percent the Germans. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, V. IV, p. 102, 109.

¹⁵⁵ On this highly controversial matter, see General Gamelin, *Servir*, 23 ff; M. Bonnet, *Fin d'une Europe*, 300 ff. P. Reynaud, *La France a sauve l'Europe*, I, 589 ff.

¹⁵⁶ "Peace in the Balance." *The Christain World*, August 29, 1939, p. 9; *The Times*, August 30, 1939. See also M. Flandin, *Politique Francals*, p. 318, Namier, *Diplomatic Prelude*, Ch. VIII.

Chamberlain had the country solidly behind him and the Government when he took up the German challenge and as long as he did not waver at the last minute.¹⁵⁷

Speaking in the House of Commons on the Friday before the outbreak of war, he explained that

. . . No man can say that the Government could have done more to try to keep open for an honorable and equitable settlement of the dispute between Germany and Poland. Nor have we neglected any means of making it crystal to the German Government that, if they insisted on using force again in the manner in which they have used it in the past, we were resolved to oppose them by force.¹⁵⁸

And after the Prime Minister had examined and discarded the German reasons for beginning the war, he concluded his speech with a statement that fully described the determination of the British people to stand on their pledge. His words were that,

. . . It now only remains for us to set our teeth and to enter upon this struggle, which we ourselves earnestly endeavored to avoid, with determination to see it through to the end.¹⁵⁹

In that final statement, Neville Chamberlain was unmistakably and clearly expressing the will of British opinion. Although there remained some suspicion in the House the following day when Britain's entry into the war was not announced to the House, this was accounted for by the fact that Britain was acting in the closest coordination with the French. It did indicate, however, that opinion was in no mood to see another state fall to aggression without forceful action on the part of Britain, even at the cost of war.¹⁶⁰

Thus the British and French ultimatums to Berlin on September 3, 1939, brought the tragic story of the August crisis to an end. Hitler's policy during those critical days is generally regarded as extremely clever, and his conclusion of the pact with Stalin was a masterpiece of diplomacy. But at the bottom Hitler made a terrible miscalculation and one that was ultimately to prove fatal. Throughout the period he had gambled on the

¹⁵⁷ Interestingly enough, a poll found these percentages of opinion to be as follows in regard to the question, "Are you satisfied with Chamberlain as Prime Minister? (Dates as indicated) October, 1938, yes, fifty-seven percent; December, 1938, yes, fifty-six percent; March, 1939, yes, fifty-eight percent; May, 1939, yes, fifty-five percent; July, 1939, yes, fifty-nine percent; and October, 1939, yes, sixty-five percent. Thus as 1939 passed and war drew closer, the Minister's popularity actually increased. "British Institute of Public Opinion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, March 1940, pp. 77-82.

¹⁵⁸ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 351, September 1, 1939, col. 455.

¹⁵⁹ H of C., *Ibid.*, col. 472-5. See *Cmd 6106* for documents relating to the outbreak of war; *Le Livre Jaune Français, Documents Diplomatiques*, 1938'39, No. 362, and *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, V. XIII, No. 632 and 635.

¹⁶⁰ H of C., *Parl. Deb.*, V. 351, September 1, 1939, col. 507-10. See also Flandin, *Politique Français*, p. 339 and an interesting account of the accord reached at this time between France and Britain is found in Reynaud, *La France a sauve l'Europe*, I, pp. 596-601.

non-action of Britain and France, believing that they were unprepared for war and that in the final crisis, they would realize their inability to effectively aid Poland and that the Western Powers would not be rash enough to stake their national existence on the support of a distant ally and most important, that the opinion in those countries would not back up a war. His estimate was completely mistaken.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis has shown that up until the early part of 1939, there was almost always significant and consistent differences in the way the various segments of opinion in Britain, first, reacted, and second, influenced the conduct and direction of Britain's foreign policy during the period under study.

First, for the most part, these differences have been demonstrated not to be entirely the result of religious, pacifist, or income divisions within the population. They have been shown to be related more to long established beliefs and possibly the information level of opinion; traditional concepts and a high level of information and interest regarding world affairs and Britain's place in those affairs appeared to provide the setting for the sharpest separation of party leaders, and hence the rank-and-file party followers on issues of foreign policy and direction of foreign policy.

Two hypothesis regarding the nature of opinion and its consequent party identification and its relation to foreign policy attitude suggest themselves. It has been shown that some people react to matters of foreign policy on the basis of some underlying orientation toward world affairs, religious ideology or trait of personality. It may further be that such people lean toward the political party which they see as closest to their own beliefs. According to this hypothesis, the party serves these people as a means of implementing a point of view regarding foreign policy which they have arrived at as a result of a variety of internal needs and external influences, including party activities. People who tended, for one reason or another, to support the Government's foreign policy accordingly aligned themselves with the Conservatives when that party faced a Parliamentary crisis. On the other hand, people who felt themselves out of sympathy with the Government's foreign policy saw the Opposition as a means of expressing this dissatisfaction and identified themselves with it. For example, in the 1935 General Election, the Government asserted that it was solidly behind the League and made wide use of a poster showing a fist planted on the Covenant and the words "Our Word is Our Bond." This attracted many who believed in the League and felt that the Conservative Party was following the right foreign policy.

An alternative hypothesis proposes that for some party identification precedes the individual's decision regarding foreign affairs and is a major

factor in determining it. According to this explanation, the party serves these people as a reference to which they look, consciously or otherwise, for their opinion on questions of foreign policy. Thus, people who identified with the Conservative Party tended to view the Government's foreign policy with approval since their political party was clearly responsible for it. People who regarded themselves as Liberals or Laborites tended to disapprove if they saw the Liberal or Labor Party as taking a critical position on questions of foreign policy.

The data of the present study does not make possible a clearcut assessment of the relative roles which these two forms of party identification played in regard to the attitudes of opinion on foreign policy. However a series of facts may be adduced which suggest that a sizable proportion of the total difference which is found between segments of opinion within the parties on these issues resulted from a tendency to follow the party with which one was identified rather than from the use of the party as a means of expressing attitude independently arrived at.

First, it is indicated that relatively few of the people who supported the Government in the 1935 General Election would have shifted to the Opposition in the event of another General Election prior to the spring of 1939. The same could be said of those who did not support the Government in 1935. These people did not move from one party to another as they found the other side's position on foreign affairs moving closer to their own as war approached. It may be that here were issues other than foreign policy which caused these people to vote with their own party. The fact should not be overlooked that many Conservatives had little faith in any slate of leaders that the Opposition could have formed as an alternative Government. However, in the period under study, the party identification of opinion did not appear to change greatly in the period, despite the emerging political importance of foreign policy issues.

It has been shown that motion after motion and confidence vote after confidence vote in the House of Commons on foreign affairs during the period under study were usually carried by the same majority. It is likely that the Conservative Party would have lost their majority if the Government had not pledged Britain's support to Poland in the spring of 1939. However the results of this study cannot conclusively determine the accuracy of that likelihood. The fact remains that the Conservative remained in power through crisis after crisis on the international scene and alledged "mistake" after "msitake" in foreign policy.

Second, as pointed out in the study, there occurred between September, 1938 and April, 1939, a substantial crystallization of opinion between the various groups in Britain, as expressed through party spokesmen, polls, the press and debates in Parliament. Generally, this period saw the demise of the controversy between the parties over foreign policy, to which the *coup de grace* was administered at the time of Britain's pledge to Poland and a firm determination to back that pledge. While there was still disagreement among prominent spokesmen within the various segments of

opinion, there was greater opportunity for the rank-and-file of all parties, especially the better informed among them, to see that their parties held nearly the same positions on foreign policy issues. The main differences were more a matter of degree and means.

Assuming that reference to persons prominent as leaders of opinion gives one of the sharpest definitions of where groups stand, it was perhaps not surprising to find that statements and criticisms which personalized the party conflict produced one of the greatest swings of party adherents to stand fast and support their own party. Time after time, as this study has indicated when the Opposition in the House of Commons turned their criticism on the Prime Minister, particularly after Neville Chamberlain took over that office, the followers of the Conservative Party would tighten their ranks and emerge from the particular crisis with a strong majority.

The fact that party identifiers divided so sharply on statements and criticisms which personalized party conflict suggests that many of these people responded primarily as Conservatives, Laborites or Liberals. They were likely to follow the party when they saw a clear line and when there was no clear line, people who supported either the Government or the Opposition were indistinguishable.

Third, there is clear evidence from the study that most opinion did, in fact, perceive a difference between the foreign policy positions held by the various groups of opinion. For example, through the Abyssinian War, the Civil War in Spain and the Italian negotiations during 1938, most opinion in the various groups and parties felt that their group was right and that the other parties were supporting the wrong cause. Followers of all groups tended strongly to see their own group as agreeing with them and they infrequently saw their own group as disagreeing with them. They were less clear in their preception of the Opposition although they were more likely to see it as disagreeing with their own position.

While recognizing the limitations of data available for this study, one cannot escape the implication that party identification carried with it a sense of shared value. In large part, opinion within the parties and groups appeared to perceive itself in the company of likeminded people, even when their party was not united. This was the case when Mr. Eden bolted from the Government ranks and along with the Churchill element of the Conservative Party, frequently failed to join the Government majority on foreign policy issues, but more important, refused to vote against the Government. These facts suggest a need for conformity to party or group position on the part of opinion within those groups, the perceiving of a group standard and an inclination to follow it.

Four, and finally, however, it should be noted that although there were significant differences in the distributions of Government and Opposition attitudes which have been indicated in the present study, there was only one issue on which any party following expressed anything like an unanimous vote, namely, the Conservative support of Neville Chamberlain at the time he went to Munich. These differences within each group of party

followers may have resulted from a failure on the part of some or many to perceive any clear party position on the solution of the issue as perhaps in the case of sanctions against Italy or on the Russian negotiations during 1939, from an unwillingness to accept their own party's line as apparently was the case with many Conservatives on the Hoare-Laval deal. It undoubtedly happens that some people identify themselves with a group, but specifically reject its stand on some issues.

In any case it is evident that the rank-and-file of all parties included many people who were either oblivious to or unresponsive to their party's position on foreign affairs issues. For them the party served neither as an instrumentation nor as a guide so far as foreign affairs were concerned.

Therefore, identification by various elements of opinion with a political party and that party's stand on the appeasement policy undoubtedly varied from a superficial preference for one party to a strong sense of association with the symbols and attitude of the party or group, a feeling of group-belonging, and a high degree of involvement with party activities. The present study depends on a very limited criterion of party identification, preference for one particular party and "the appeasement policy from 1933 to 1939." This procedure had the advantage of identifying a relatively large proportion of the population of Britain with a particular foreign policy over a period of years, but it does not permit an analysis of the effect of degrees of identification with the particular foreign policy as advocated or followed by the various political parties.

Despite the fact that the criterion of policy identification was crude and undoubtedly included much opinion to whom foreign policy meant very little, there were differences of attitude between the followers of the major parties which cannot be credited to chance or to the influence of such correlated factors as this study could measure. Keeping in mind the limits of the material available for this study, these differences, had the criterion been more exacting, would in all probability have been more apparent and the cross-currents within British opinion would have been shown in greater relief.

Not all of the uniformity of opinion which is found among people who indicate preference for a party and that party's policy can be attributed to an inclination to follow a position seen as taken by the party one considers himself as belonging to. It is assumed that some people who identify with a party and that party's foreign policy do so in order to find a means of expressing a point of view which they hold and which they see the party as adhering to. The data of the present study suggest, however, that for many people, Conservative, Liberal or Labor party attitudes regarding foreign policy resulted from conscious or unconscious adherence to a perceived party line, rather than from influences independent of party identification.

The manner in which the mechanism of identification operates to influence the opinions of party followers and attitude on foreign policy is only suggested in the present study. Subsequent research should explore in

detail the image of the parties held by the public generally and by people of various degrees of identification with the parties in Britain. This should include not only a study of how party leadership and the formal structure of the parties in Great Britain are perceived but also what the followership of those parties is seen to be. Evidence from the present study suggests that the British people tended to see the others of their own party as sharing their own opinions. This sense of party solidarity was clearly an important attribute of British political party identification on foreign policy issues and presents attractive and worthwhile possibilities for further research in this field.

Second, and perhaps more important, the foregoing study not only provides detailed information regarding the formation, crosscurrents and attitude of opinion toward foreign policy in Britain, but, to a limited extent, it also provides the means of an assessment of the actual influence that opinion exerted on the conduct and direction of Britain's foreign policy during the period under study.

However, it must be remembered that during this period, all too frequently the British people were not informed, or at least fully informed by the Government of important steps and decisions of British foreign policy until some time after the event. Often the public reaction to important events in foreign policy may be used, along with the evidence of party identification, as a guide to the possible influence of opinion on foreign policy. For example, the public reaction following on the heels of the Hoare-Laval proposals for a settlement of the Abyssinian dispute was sufficiently strong to cause the repudiation of the proposals as well as the author by the British Government. In this case, the public had no knowledge of the proposed deal until after the governments involved had reached the agreement. This would indicate that had public opinion been aware of the proposed agreement in advance, no party could have forced the issue through Parliament and remained in office.

With an empire and occupying the geographic position that she did in Europe, it was only natural that Great Britain was vitally interested in all international affairs, particularly those concerning Europe. But in Britain, as in all democracies, the official attitude of the Government was not necessarily a true reflection of the attitude of an actual majority of the people at all times. Further, even this official attitude underwent certain changes, changes which coincided with those of the Government or to a lesser extent, changes within the Government.

The study has shown that the Conservatives, by and large, carried on a more or less consistent program for reconciliation with the Axis and at the same time, avoiding Soviet Russia, while on the other hand, the Labor Party, and other parties to a somewhat lesser degree, reversed this policy, though the reversal was more noticeable in their demands for closer cooperation with Russia than in their aloofness from Germany. There were however, some members of both parties who disagreed with their party's platform in these respects, and the most notable of these dissenters was

Winston Churchill who, from the very beginning of the rise to power of the Nazi Party in Germany, opposed the Conservative Party policy of reconciliation. And when British concessions became outright appeasement, other Conservative spokesmen joined with him in an outright denunciation of that policy until the policy was reversed at the time of the crisis in Poland.

It is quite conceivable that had there been another acceptable leader from any party, the reigning party would have lost their office at some time in the period under study. However any spokesman until very late in the period who talked of getting tough with the Axis Powers failed to gain the necessary support from opinion in Parliament to take office. The majority in Britain had no desire to fight or even to support a vigorous drive for additional armaments or conscription and this negative attitude had its effect on British policy. It appeared that it was more of a case of opinion in the parties differing in degree and detail rather than in substance and fundamentals.

This was true from the beginning of the period. At the time of the invasion of Manchuria by Japan, the British Government manifested great caution and reserve and urged both parties there to adhere to League policy, in spite of the aggression that clearly had taken place. This course was not only adopted as a result of top-level decisions within the British Government, but it also took into consideration the state of British opinion on the issue.

Again, when Ethiopia was invaded by Italy, the British took a strong stand which was not so opposed to Italy's objective as it was opposed to the Italian method. It has been shown that opinion opposed such interference there which might entangle Britain in the struggle. Yet, when the British Government, through the Hoare-Lavel proposals, attempted to legalize Italian claims and seizures, the people effected an almost unheard of turnabout, and so strongly did public opinion manifest its opposition to this procedure that the Government was forced to abandon it and accept the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare. Yet opinion was not prepared to actively intervene in the dispute at the risk of war.

In the Rhineland and Austrian crises, Britain, while protesting the action publicly, indicated both officially and otherwise, approval of such appeasement toward Germany. Opinion accepted these decisions by their government's leaders without protest and generally favored the action.

At the time of Munich, the dread threat of war hung so closely over the heads of opinion that while the fate of the small nation involved was deplored opinion not prepared to force the British Government to act otherwise. The significance of the events was not completely recognized by opinion at the time of the event in question and the realization of their own worsening position came in the following months and undoubtedly contributed to the end of appeasement as a tool of foreign policy.

However, in spite of the many disappointments that Hitler brought to Western Europe after Munich, Neville Chamberlain and a good part of

opinion clung to the hope that his policy had brought stability to Europe and removed the threat of war. In the crisis created by the German seizure of Prague, Neville Chamberlain's faith in his policy was not shaken and his statements in Parliament on March 15th and 16th indicate that he would have condoned this latest breach of faith. British opinion, however, became alarmed at seeing the Germans tear up treaties and expose Britain as unable to make good her word. It is unlikely that the attitude of other governments, including the American position, had an influence on the British Prime Minister comparable to the pressure of opinion in his own country. It is certain that Lord Halifax was aware of this pressure and induced Mr. Chamberlain to radically change his Birmingham speech of March 17, 1939. This was the point, that due to a certain degree, opinion was a factor in the sudden reversal of British policy. British statesmen, with opinion at their backs, suddenly realized that the Vistula was as important as the Rhine and they adjusted foreign policy accordingly.

Again at the time of the Albanian invasion by Italy, Britain bluntly warned the Italians that any attempt to expand their holdings on the north, east, or south would mean war. Opinion was demanding a "get tough" policy and the Government had little choice in the matter.

It can be assumed, from the foregoing study, that British opinion, while of some influence in isolated instances, did not consistently and seriously influence British policy during the period under study. It appears to be more of a case of opinion following the policy than policy following opinion. It can also be said that this may have been the result of opinion desiring a policy which coincided with the policy actually carried out by a government put there by the same opinion.

The British public did not desire war and their Government which determined that policy, was allowed to continue in office until both the Government and opinion decided at almost the same time that the time had come to draw the line with the pledge to Poland. This is further bolstered by the fact that of all the other leaders available to the public who was capable of forming an alternate government with a policy more in line with the attitude of opinion, none could gain the necessary majority.

The results of this study indicate that probably both the public and the Prime Minister reached the changing point in policy at almost the same instant. Those few people both in the Government and outside the Government who had sounded warnings long before the actual shift in British policy, cannot be construed as representing anything like a majority demanding a change in foreign policy while it was based on appeasement alone.

One of the facts brought out in the study is that in Britain, as in other democracies, public opinion tends to become extreme and absolute about war and peace or to oscillate between appeasement and a forceful foreign policy. The consequences in this century have been tragic. For absolute opinions are a fatal obstacle to successful negotiations. Foreign policy is

caught between disarmament which must give in easily and a call for risking war in order to halt aggressors.

In closing, it is to be noted that the most important point of the policy pursued by Britain, and others as well, and which reached a climax at Munich, is not so much its importance then as its significance as an analysis of a case-history in the disease of political shortsightedness which afflicted the leaders and the people of Britain and the world in the years between wars. For the problem which faced Britain then is the same which faces her and the world now and continues to remain unsolved. It is not, fundamentally, a political or a technical problem, it is a psychological and spiritual one. Can the world and world opinion with the experience of two costly wars behind it cause free governments to admit, both consciously and subconsciously, the essential truth that peace is one and indivisible, that, in our efforts "to seek peace and insure it", we must realize that a threat to the peace of any country is a threat to all-and must be recognized as such?

The chief things that the free peoples of the world must bear in mind, if their governments are to manage their foreign affairs prudently and wisely, is that it must keep their commitments and their power in balance, that a major element in this management is the consent of those whom we wish to associate with us, and that this consent requires flexibility, discipline and a high sense of responsibility in the general management of their power.

This is the challenge with which we are confronted, today, and on our capacity to accept that challenge hangs the future of our civilization and our way of life.

THE END

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The Economist	Bulletin of International News
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Oxford Pamphlet	Review of Politics
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